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WINTER SUNSHINE
AND
BIRDS AND POETS
WITH OTHER PAPERS

BY

John Burroughs



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1921

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WINTER SUNSHINE

PREFATORY

THE only part of my book I wish to preface is the last part, — the foreign sketches, — and it is not much matter about these, since, if they do not contain their own proof, I shall not attempt to supply it here.

I have been told that De Lolme, who wrote a notable book on the English Constitution, said that after he had been in England a few weeks, he fully made up his mind to write a book on that country; after he had lived there a year, he still thought of writing a book, but was not so certain about it, but that after a residence of ten years he abandoned his first design altogether. Instead of furnishing an argument against writing out one's first impressions of a country, I think the experience of the Frenchman shows the importance of doing it at once. The sensations of the first day are what we want, — the first flush of the traveler's thought and feeling, before his perception and sensibilities become cloyed or blunted, or before he in any way becomes a part of that which he would observe and describe. Then the American in England is just enough at home to enable him to discriminate subtle shades and differences at first sight which might escape a traveler

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of another and antagonistic race. He has brought with him, but little modified or impaired, his whole inheritance of English ideas and predilections, and much of what he sees affects him like a memory. It is his own past, his ante-natal life, and his long-buried ancestors look through his eyes and perceive with his sense.

I have attempted only the surface, and to express my own first day's uncloyed and unalloyed satisfaction. Of course I have put these things through my own processes and given them my own coloring (as who would not), and if other travelers do not find what I did, it is no fault of mine; or if the "Britishers" do not deserve all the pleasant things I say of them, why then so much the worse for them.

In fact, if it shall appear that I have treated this part in the same spirit that I have the themes in the other chapters, reporting only such things as impressed me and stuck to me and tasted good, I shall be satisfied.

ESOPUS-ON-HUDSON, November, 1875.

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I

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AN American resident in England is reported as saying that the English have an atmosphere but no climate. The reverse of this remark would apply pretty accurately to our own case. We certainly have a climate, a two-edged one that cuts both ways, threatening us with sun-stroke on the one hand and with frost-stroke on the other; but we have no atmosphere to speak of in New York and New England, except now and then during the dog-days, or the fitful and uncertain Indian Summer. An atmosphere, the quality of tone and mellowness in the near distance, is the product of a more humid climate. Hence, as we go south from New York, the atmospheric effects become more rich and varied, until on reaching the Potomac you find an atmosphere as well as a climate. The latter is still on the vehement American scale, full of sharp and violent changes and contrasts, baking and blistering in summer, and nipping and blighting in winter, but the spaces are not so purged and bare;

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the horizon wall does not so often have the appearance of having just been washed and scrubbed down. There is more depth and visibility to the open air, a stronger infusion of the Indian Summer element throughout the year, than is found farther north. The days are softer and more brooding, and the nights more enchanting. It is here that Walt Whitman saw the full moon

“Pour down Night’s nimbus floods,”

as any one may see her, during her full, from October to May. There is more haze and vapor in the atmosphere during that period, and every particle seems to collect and hold the pure radiance until the world swims with the lunar outpouring. Is not the full moon always on the side of fair weather? I think it is Sir William Herschel who says her influence tends to dispel the clouds. Certain it is her beauty is seldom lost or even veiled in this southern or semi-southern clime.

It is here also the poet speaks of the

“Floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous,

Indolent sinking sun, burning, expanding the air,”

a description that would not apply with the same force farther north, where the air seems thinner and less capable of absorbing and holding the sunlight. Indeed, the opulence and splendor of our climate, at least the climate of our Atlantic seaboard, cannot

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be fully appreciated by the dweller north of the thirty-ninth parallel. It seemed as if I had never seen but a second-rate article of sunlight or moonlight until I had taken up my abode in the National Capital. It may be, perhaps, because we have such splendid specimens of both at that period of the year when one values such things highest, namely, in the fall and winter and early spring. Sunlight is good any time, but a bright, evenly tempered day is certainly more engrossing to the attention in winter than in summer, and such days seem the rule, and not the exception, in the Washington winter. The deep snows keep to the north, the heavy rains to the south, leaving a blue space central over the border States. And there is not one of the winter months but wears this blue zone as a girdle.

I am not thinking especially of the Indian Summer, that charming but uncertain second youth of the New England year, but of regularly recurring lucid intervals in the weather system of the Virginia fall and winter, when the best our climate is capable of stands revealed, — southern days with northern blood in their veins, exhilarating, elastic, full of action, the hyperborean oxygen of the North tempered by the dazzling sun of the South, a little bitter in winter to all travelers but the pedestrian, — to him sweet and warming, — but in autumn a vintage that intoxicates all lovers of the open air.

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It is impossible not to dilate and expand under such skies. One breathes deeply and steps proudly, and if he have any of the eagle nature in him, it comes to the surface then. There is a sense of altitude about these dazzling November and December days, of mountain-tops and pure ether. The earth in passing through the fire of summer seems to have lost all its dross, and life all its impediments.

But what does not the dweller in the National Capital endure in reaching these days! Think of the agonies of the heated term, the ragings of the dog-star, the purgatory of heat and dust, of baking, blistering pavements, of cracked and powdered fields, of dead, stifling night air, from which every tonic and antiseptic quality seems eliminated, leaving a residuum of sultry malaria and all-diffusing privy and sewer gases, that lasts from the first of July to near the middle of September! But when October is reached, the memory of these things is afar off, and the glory of the days is a perpetual surprise.

I sally out in the morning with the ostensible purpose of gathering chestnuts, or autumn leaves, or persimmons, or exploring some run or branch. It is, say, the last of October or the first of November. The air is not balmy, but tart and pungent, like the flavor of the red-cheeked apples by the roadside. In the sky not a cloud, not a speck ; a

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vast dome of blue ether lightly suspended above the world. The woods are heaped with color like a painter's palette, — great splashes of red and orange and gold. The ponds and streams bear upon their bosoms leaves of all tints, from the deep maroon of the oak to the pale yellow of the chestnut. In the glens and nooks it is so still that the chirp of a solitary cricket is noticeable. The red berries of the dogwood and spice-bush and other shrubs shine in the sun like rubies and coral. The crows fly high above the earth, as they do only on such days, forms of ebony floating across the azure, and the buzzards look like kingly birds, sailing round and round.

Or it may be later in the season, well into December. The days are equally bright, but a little more rugged. The mornings are ushered in by an immense spectrum thrown upon the eastern sky. A broad bar of red and orange lies along the low horizon, surmounted by an expanse of color in which green struggles with yellow and blue with green half the way to the zenith. By and by the red and orange spread upward and grow dim, the spectrum fades, and the sky becomes suffused with yellow white light, and in a moment the fiery scintillations of the sun begin to break across the Maryland hills. Then before long the mists and vapors uprise like the breath of a giant army, and for an hour or two one is reminded of a November morn-

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ing in England. But by mid-forenoon the only trace of the obscurity that remains is a slight haze, and the day is indeed a summons and a challenge to come forth. If the October days were a cordial like the sub-acids of fruit, these are a tonic like the wine of iron. Drink deep, or be careful how you taste this December vintage. The first sip may chill, but a full draught warms and invigorates. No loitering by the brooks or in the woods now, but spirited, rugged walking along the public highway. The sunbeams are welcome now. They seem like pure electricity, — like friendly and recuperating lightning. Are we led to think electricity abounds only in summer when we see in the storm-clouds, as it were, the veins and ore-beds of it? I imagine it is equally abundant in winter, and more equable and better tempered. Who ever breasted a snow-storm without being excited and exhilarated, as if this meteor had come charged with latent auroræ of the North, as doubtless it has? It is like being pelted with sparks from a battery. Behold the frost-work on the pane, — the wild, fantastic limnings and etchings! can there be any doubt but this subtle agent has been here? Where is it not? It is the life of the crystal, the architect of the flake, the fire of the frost, the soul of the sunbeam. This crisp winter air is full of it. When I come in at night after an all-day tramp I am charged like a Leyden jar; my hair crackles and snaps beneath the comb

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like a cat's back, and a strange, new glow diffuses itself through my system.

It is a spur that one feels at this season more than at any other. How nimbly you step forth! The woods roar, the waters shine, and the hills look invitingly near. You do not miss the flowers and the songsters, or wish the trees or the fields any different, or the heavens any nearer. Every object pleases. A rail fence, running athwart the hills, now in sunshine and now in shadow, — how the eye lingers upon it! Or the straight, light-gray trunks of the trees, where the woods have recently been laid open by a road or a clearing, — how curious they look, and as if surprised in undress! Next year they will begin to shoot out branches and make themselves a screen. Or the farm scenes, — the winter barnyards littered with husks and straw, the rough-coated horses, the cattle sunning themselves or walking down to the spring to drink, the domestic fowls moving about, — there is a touch of sweet, homely life in these things that the winter sun enhances and brings out. Every sign of life is welcome at this season. I love to hear dogs bark, hens cackle, and boys shout; one has no privacy with Nature now, and does not wish to seek her in nooks and hidden ways. She is not at home if he goes there; her house is shut up and her hearth cold; only the sun and sky, and perchance the waters, wear the old look, and to-day we will

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make love to them, and they shall abundantly return it.

Even the crows and the buzzards draw the eye fondly. The National Capital is a great place for buzzards, and I make the remark in no double or allegorical sense either, for the buzzards I mean are black and harmless as doves, though perhaps hardly dovelike in their tastes. My vulture is also a bird of leisure, and sails through the ether on long flexible pinions, as if that was the one delight of his life. Some birds have wings, others have "pinions." The buzzard enjoys this latter distinction. There is something in the sound of the word that suggests that easy, dignified, undulatory movement. He does not propel himself along by sheer force of muscle, after the plebeian fashion of the crow, for instance, but progresses by a kind of royal indirection that puzzles the eye. Even on a windy winter day he rides the vast aerial billows as placidly as ever, rising and falling as he comes up toward you, carving his way through the resisting currents by a slight oscillation to the right and left, but never once beating the air openly.

This superabundance of wing power is very unequally distributed among the feathered races, the hawks and vultures having by far the greater share of it. They cannot command the most speed, but their apparatus seems the most delicate and consummate. Apparently a fine play of muscle, a subtle

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shifting of the power along the outstretched wings, a perpetual loss and a perpetual recovery of the equipoise, sustains them and bears them along. With them flying is a luxury, a fine art ; not merely a quicker and safer means of transit from one point to another, but a gift so free and spontaneous that work becomes leisure and movement rest. They are not so much going somewhere, from this perch to that, as they are abandoning themselves to the mere pleasure of riding upon the air.

And it is beneath such grace and high-bred leisure that Nature hides in her creatures the occupation of scavenger and carrion-eater!

But the worst thing about the buzzard is his silence. The crow caws, the hawk screams, the eagle barks, but the buzzard says not a word. So far as I have observed, he has no vocal powers whatever. Nature dare not trust him to speak. In his case she preserves a discreet silence.

The crow may not have the sweet voice which the fox in his flattery attributed to him, but he has a good, strong, native speech nevertheless. How much character there is in it! How much thrift and independence! Of course his plumage is firm, his color decided, his wit quick. He understands you at once and tells you so; so does the hawk by his scornful, defiant *whir-r-r-r-r*. Hardy, happy outlaws, the crows, how I love them! Alert, social, republican, always able to look out for himself, not

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afraid of the cold and the snow, fishing when flesh is scarce, and stealing when other resources fail, the crow is a character I would not willingly miss from the landscape. I love to see his track in the snow or the mud, and his graceful pedestrianism about the brown fields.

He is no interloper, but has the air and manner of being thoroughly at home, and in rightful possession of the land. He is no sentimentalist like some of the plaining, disconsolate song-birds, but apparently is always in good health and good spirits. No matter who is sick, or dejected, or unsatisfied, or what the weather is, or what the price of corn, the crow is well and finds life sweet. He is the dusky embodiment of worldly wisdom and prudence. Then he is one of Nature's self-appointed constables and greatly magnifies his office. He would fain arrest every hawk or owl or grimalkin that ventures abroad. I have known a posse of them to beset the fox and cry "Thief!" till Reynard hid himself for shame. Do I say the fox flattered the crow when he told him he had a sweet voice? Yet one of the most musical sounds in nature proceeds from the crow. All the crow tribe, from the blue jay up, are capable of certain low ventriloquial notes that have peculiar cadence and charm. I often hear the crow indulging in his in winter, and am reminded of the sound of the dulcimer. The bird stretches up and exerts himself like a cock in the act of crowing, and

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gives forth a peculiarly clear, vitreous sound that is sure to arrest and reward your attention. This is no doubt the song the fox begged to be favored with, as in delivering it the crow must inevitably let drop the piece of meat.

The crow in his purity, I believe, is seen and heard only in the North. Before you reach the Potomac there is an infusion of a weaker element, the fish crow, whose helpless feminine call contrasts strongly with the hearty masculine caw of the original Simon.

In passing from crows to colored men, I hope I am not guilty of any disrespect toward the latter. In my walks about Washington, both winter and summer, colored men are about the only pedestrians I meet; and I meet them everywhere, in the fields and in the woods and in the public road, swinging along with that peculiar, rambling, elastic gait, taking advantage of the short cuts and threading the country with paths and byways. I doubt if the colored man can compete with his white brother as a walker; his foot is too flat and the calves of his legs too small, but he is certainly the most picturesque traveler to be seen on the road. He bends his knees more than the white man, and oscillates more to and fro, or from side to side. The imaginary line which his head describes is full of deep and long undulations. Even the boys and young men sway as if bearing a burden.

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Along the fences and by the woods I come upon their snares, dead-falls, and rude box-traps. The freedman is a successful trapper and hunter, and has by nature an insight into these things. I frequently see him in market or on his way thither with a tame 'possum clinging timidly to his shoulders, or a young coon or fox led by a chain. Indeed, the colored man behaves precisely like the rude unsophisticated peasant that he is, and there is fully as much virtue in him, using the word in its true sense, as in the white peasant; indeed, much more than in the poor whites who grew up by his side; while there is often a benignity and a depth of human experience and sympathy about some of these dark faces that comes home to one like the best one sees in art or reads in books.

One touch of nature makes all the world akin, and there is certainly a touch of nature about the colored man; indeed, I had almost said, of Anglo-Saxon nature. They have the quaintness and homeliness of the simple English stock. I seem to see my grandfather and grandmother in the ways and doings of these old "uncles" and "aunties;" indeed, the lesson comes nearer home than even that, for I seem to see myself in them, and, what is more, I see that they see themselves in me, and that neither party has much to boast of.

The negro is a plastic human creature, and is thoroughly domesticated and thoroughly anglicized.

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The same cannot be said of the Indian, for instance, between whom and us there can never exist any fellowship, any community of feeling or interest; or is there any doubt but the Chinaman will always remain to us the same impenetrable mystery he has been from the first?

But there is no mystery about the negro, and he touches the Anglo-Saxon at more points than the latter is always willing to own, taking as kindly and naturally to all his customs and usages, yea, to all his prejudices and superstitions, as if to the manner born. The colored population in very many respects occupies the same position as that occupied by our rural populations a generation or two ago, seeing signs and wonders, haunted by the fear of ghosts and hobgoblins, believing in witchcraft, charms, the evil eye, etc. In religious matters, also, they are on the same level, and about the only genuine shouting Methodists that remain are to be found in the colored churches. Indeed, I fear the negro tries to ignore or forget himself as far as possible, and that he would deem it felicity enough to play second fiddle to the white man all his days. He liked his master, but he likes the Yankee better, not because he regards him as his deliverer, but mainly because the two-handed thrift of the Northerner, his varied and wonderful ability, completely captivates the imagination of the black man, just learning to shift for himself.

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How far he has caught or is capable of being imbued with the Yankee spirit of enterprise and industry, remains to be seen. In some things he has already shown himself an apt scholar. I notice, for instance, that he is about as industrious an office-seeker as the most patriotic among us, and that he learns with amazing ease and rapidity all the arts and wiles of the politicians. He is versed in parades, mass meetings, caucuses, and will soon shine on the stump. I observe, also, that he is not far behind us in the observance of the fashions, and that he is as good a church-goer, theatre-goer, and pleasure-seeker generally, as his means will allow.

As a bootblack or newsboy, he is an adept in all the tricks of the trade; and as a fast young man about town among his kind, he is worthy his white prototype: the swagger, the impertinent look, the coarse remark, the loud laugh, are all in the best style. As a loungeur and starrer also, on the street corners of a Sunday afternoon, he has taken his degree.

On the other hand, I know cases among our colored brethren, plenty of them, of conscientious and well-directed effort and industry in the worthiest fields, in agriculture, in trade, in the mechanic arts, that show the colored man has in him all the best rudiments of a citizen of the States.

Lest my winter sunshine appear to have too many dark rays in it, — buzzards, crows, and col-

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ored men, — I hasten to add the brown and neutral tints; and maybe a red ray can be extracted from some of these hard, smooth, sharp-gritted roads that radiate from the National Capital. Leading out of Washington there are several good roads that invite the pedestrian. There is the road that leads west or northwest from Georgetown, the Tenallytown road, the very sight of which, on a sharp, lustrous winter Sunday, makes the feet tingle. Where it cuts through a hill or high knoll, it is so red it fairly glows in the sunlight. I'll warrant you will kindle, and your own color will mount, if you resign yourself to it. It will conduct you to the wild and rocky scenery of the upper Potomac, to Great Falls, and on to Harper's Ferry, if your courage holds out. Then there is the road that leads north over Meridian Hill, across Piny Branch, and on through the wood of Crystal Springs to Fort Stevens, and so into Maryland. This is the proper route for an excursion in the spring to gather wild flowers, or in the fall for a nutting expedition, as it lays open some noble woods and a great variety of charming scenery; or for a musing moonlight saunter, say in December, when the Enchantress has folded and folded the world in her web, it is by all means the course to take. Your staff rings on the hard ground; the road, a misty white belt, gleams and vanishes before you; the woods are cavernous and still; the fields lie in a lunar trance, and you will your-

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self return fairly mesmerized by the beauty of the scene.

Or you can bend your steps eastward over the Eastern Branch, up Good Hope Hill, and on till you strike the Marlborough pike, as a trio of us did that cold February Sunday we walked from Washington to Pumpkintown and back.

A short sketch of this pilgrimage is a fair sample of these winter walks.

The delight I experienced in making this new acquisition to my geography was of itself sufficient to atone for any aches or weariness I may have felt. The mere fact that one may walk from Washington to Pumpkintown was a discovery I had been all these years in making. I had walked to Sligo, and to the Northwest Branch, and had made the Falls of the Potomac in a circuitous route of ten miles, coming suddenly upon the river in one of its wildest passes; but I little dreamed all the while that there, in a wrinkle (or shall I say furrow?) of the Maryland hills, almost visible from the outlook of the bronze squaw on the dome of the Capitol, and just around the head of Oxen Run, lay Pumpkintown.

The day was cold but the sun was bright, and the foot took hold of those hard, dry, gritty Maryland roads with the keenest relish. How the leaves of the laurel glistened! The distant oak woods suggested gray-blue smoke, while the recesses of the pines looked like the lair of Night. Beyond the

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District limits we struck the Marlborough pike, which, round and hard and white, held squarely to the east and was visible a mile ahead. Its friction brought up the temperature amazingly and spurred the pedestrians into their best time. As I trudged along, Thoreau's lines came naturally to mind: —

“ When the spring stirs my blood
With the instinct of travel,
I can get enough gravel
On the old Marlborough road.”

Cold as the day was (many degrees below freezing), I heard and saw bluebirds, and as we passed along, every sheltered tangle and overgrown field or lane swarmed with snowbirds and sparrows, — the latter mainly Canada or tree sparrows, with a sprinkling of the song, and, maybe, one or two other varieties. The birds are all social and gregarious in winter, and seem drawn together by common instinct. Where you find one, you will not only find others of the same kind, but also several different kinds. The regular winter residents go in little bands, like a well-organized pioneer corps, — the jays and woodpeckers in advance, doing the heavier work; the nuthatches next, more lightly armed; and the creepers and kinglets, with their slender beaks and microscopic eyes, last of all.¹

¹ It seems to me this is a borrowed observation, but I do not know to whom to credit it.

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Now and then, among the gray and brown tints there was a dash of scarlet, — the cardinal grosbeak, whose presence was sufficient to enliven any scene. In the leafless trees, as a ray of sunshine fell upon him, he was visible a long way off, glowing like a crimson spar, — the only bit of color in the whole landscape.

Maryland is here rather a level, unpicturesque country, — the gaze of the traveler bounded, at no great distance, by oak woods, with here and there a dark line of pine. We saw few travelers, passed a ragged squad or two of colored boys and girls, and met some colored women on their way to or from church, perhaps. Never ask a colored person — at least the crude, rustic specimens — any question that involves a memory of names, or any arbitrary signs; you will rarely get a satisfactory answer. If you could speak to them in their own dialect, or touch the right spring in their minds, you would, no doubt, get the desired information. They are as local in their notions and habits as the animals, and go on much the same principles, as no doubt we all do, more or less. I saw a colored boy come into a public office one day, and ask to see a man with red hair; the name was utterly gone from him. The man had red whiskers, which was as near as he had come to the mark. Ask your washerwoman what street she lives on, or where such a one has moved to, and the chances are that she cannot telⁿ

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you, except that it is a "right smart distance" this way or that, or near Mr. So-and-so, or by such and such a place, describing some local feature. I love to amuse myself, when walking through the market, by asking the old aunties, and the young aunties, too, the names of their various "yarbs." It seems as if they must trip on the simplest names. Blood-root they generally call "grubroot;" trailing arbutus goes by the names of "trolling" arbutus, "training arbuty-flower," and ground "ivory;" in Virginia they call woodchucks "moonacks."

On entering Pumpkintown — a cluster of five or six small, whitewashed blockhouses, toeing squarely on the highway — the only inhabitant we saw was a small boy, who was as frank and simple as if he had lived on pumpkins and marrow squashes all his days.

Half a mile farther on, we turned to the right into a characteristic Southern road, — a way entirely unkempt, and wandering free as the wind; now fading out into a broad field; now contracting into a narrow track between hedges; anon roaming with delightful abandon through swamps and woods, asking no leave and keeping no bounds. About two o'clock we stopped in an opening in a pine wood and ate our lunch. We had the good fortune to hit upon a charming place. A wood-chopper had been there, and let in the sunlight full and strong; and the white chips, the newly-piled wood, and the

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mounds of green boughs, were welcome features, and helped also to keep off the wind that would creep through under the pines. The ground was soft and dry, with a carpet an inch thick of pine-needles; and with a fire, less for warmth than to make the picture complete, we ate our bread and beans with the keenest satisfaction, and with a relish that only the open air can give.

A fire, of course, — an encampment in the woods at this season without a fire would be like leaving Hamlet out of the play. A smoke is your standard, your flag; it defines and locates your camp at once; you are an interloper until you have made a fire; then you take possession; then the trees and rocks seem to look upon you more kindly, and you look more kindly upon them. As one opens his budget, so he opens his heart by a fire. Already something has gone out from you, and comes back as a faint reminiscence and home feeling in the air and place. One looks out upon the crow or the buzzard that sails by as from his own fireside. It is not I that am a wanderer and a stranger now; it is the crow and the buzzard. The chickadees were silent at first, but now they approach by little journeys, as if to make our acquaintance. The nuthatches, also, cry “Yank! yank!” in no inhospitable tones; and those purple finches there in the cedars, — are they not stealing our berries?

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How one lingers about a fire under such circumstances, loath to leave it, poking up the sticks, throwing in the burnt ends, adding another branch and yet another, and looking back as he turns to go to catch one more glimpse of the smoke going up through the trees! I reckon it is some remnant of the primitive man, which we all carry about with us. He has not yet forgotten his wild, free life, his arboreal habitations, and the sweet-bitter times he had in those long-gone ages. With me, he wakes up directly at the smell of smoke, of burning branches in the open air; and all his old love of fire and his dependence upon it, in the camp or the cave, come freshly to mind.

On resuming our march, we filed off along a charming wood-path, — a regular little tunnel through the dense pines, carpeted with silence, and allowing us to look nearly the whole length of it through its soft green twilight out into the open sunshine of the fields beyond. A pine wood in Maryland or in Virginia is quite a different thing from a pine wood in Maine or Minnesota, — the difference, in fact, between yellow pine and white. The former as it grows hereabout, is short and scrubby, with branches nearly to the ground, and looks like the dwindling remnant of a greater race.

Beyond the woods, the path led us by a colored man's habitation, — a little, low frame house, on a knoll, surrounded by the quaint devices and rude

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makeshifts of these quaint and rude people. A few poles stuck in the ground, clapboarded with cedar-boughs and cornstalks, and supporting a roof of the same, gave shelter to a rickety one-horse wagon and some farm implements. Near this there was a large, compact tent, made entirely of cornstalks, with, for door, a bundle of the same, in the dry, warm, nest-like interior of which the husking of the corn crop seemed to have taken place. A few rods farther on, we passed through another humble dooryard, musical with dogs and dusky with children. We crossed here the outlying fields of a large, thrifty, well-kept-looking farm with a showy, highly ornamental frame house in the centre. There was even a park with deer, and among the gayly painted outbuildings I noticed a fancy dove-cote, with an immense flock of doves circling above it; some whiskey-dealer from the city, we were told, trying to take the poison out of his money by agriculture.

We next passed through some woods, when we emerged into a broad, sunlit, fertile-looking valley, called Oxen Run. We stooped down and drank of its clear white-pebbled stream, in the veritable spot, I suspect, where the oxen do. There were clouds of birds here on the warm slopes, with the usual sprinkling along the bushy margin of the stream of scarlet grosbeaks. The valley of Oxen Run has many good-looking farms, with old picturesque

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houses, and loose rambling barns, such as artists love to put into pictures.

But it is a little awkward to go east. It always seems left-handed. I think this is the feeling of all walkers, and that Thoreau's experience in this respect was not singular. The great magnet is the sun, and we follow him. I notice that people lost in the woods work to the westward. When one comes out of his house and asks himself, "Which way shall I walk?" and looks up and down and around for a sign or a token, does he not nine times out of ten turn to the west? He inclines this way as surely as the willow wand bends toward the water. There is something more genial and friendly in this direction.

Occasionally in winter I experience a southern inclination, and cross Long Bridge and rendezvous for the day in some old earthwork on the Virginia hills. The roads are not so inviting in this direction, but the line of old forts with rabbits burrowing in the bomb-proofs, and a magazine, or officers' quarters turned into a cow stable by colored squatters, form an interesting feature. But, whichever way I go, I am glad I came. All roads lead up to the Jerusalem the walker seeks. There is everywhere the vigorous and masculine winter air, and the impalpable sustenance the mind draws from all natural forms.

II

THE EXHILARATIONS OF THE ROAD

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road.

WALT WHITMAN.

OCCASIONALLY on the sidewalk, amid the dapper, swiftly moving, high-heeled boots and gaiters, I catch a glimpse of the naked human foot. Nimbly it scuffs along, the toes spread, the sides flatten, the heel protrudes; it grasps the curbing, or bends to the form of the uneven surfaces, — a thing sensuous and alive, that seems to take cognizance of whatever it touches or passes. How primitive and uncivil it looks in such company, — a real barbarian in the parlor! We are so unused to the human anatomy, to simple, unadorned nature, that it looks a little repulsive; but it is beautiful for all that. Though it be a black foot and an unwashed foot, it shall be exalted. It is a thing of life amid leather, a free spirit amid cramped, a wild bird amid caged, an athlete amid consumptives. It is the symbol of my order, the Order of Walkers. That unhampered, vitally playing piece of anatomy is the type of the pedestrian, man returned to first

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principles, in direct contact and intercourse with the earth and the elements, his faculties unsheathed, his mind plastic, his body toughened, his heart light, his soul dilated; while those cramped and distorted members in the calf and kid are the unfortunate wretches doomed to carriages and cushions.

I am not going to advocate the disuse of boots and shoes, or the abandoning of the improved modes of travel; but I am going to brag as lustily as I can on behalf of the pedestrian, and show how all the shining angels second and accompany the man who goes afoot, while all the dark spirits are ever looking out for a chance to ride.

When I see the discomforts that able-bodied American men will put up with rather than go a mile or half a mile on foot, the abuses they will tolerate and encourage, crowding the street car on a little fall in the temperature or the appearance of an inch or two of snow, packing up to overflowing, dangling to the straps, treading on each other's toes, breathing each other's breaths, crushing the women and children, hanging by tooth and nail to a square inch of the platform, imperiling their limbs and killing the horses, — I think the commonest tramp in the street has good reason to felicitate himself on his rare privilege of going afoot. Indeed, a race that neglects or despises this primitive gift, that fears the touch of the soil, that has no foot-paths, no community of ownership in the land

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which they imply, that warns off the walker as a trespasser, that knows no way but the highway, the carriage-way, that forgets the stile, the foot-bridge. that even ignores the rights of the pedestrian in the public road, providing no escape for him but in the ditch or up the bank, is in a fair way to far more serious degeneracy.

Shakespeare makes the chief qualification of the walker a merry heart: —

“Jog on, jog on, the footpath way,
And merrily hent the stile-a;
A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad tires in a mile-a.”

The human body is a steed that goes freest and longest under a light rider, and the lightest of all riders is a cheerful heart. Your sad, or morose, or embittered, or preoccupied heart settles heavily into the saddle, and the poor beast, the body, breaks down the first mile. Indeed, the heaviest thing in the world is a heavy heart. Next to that, the most burdensome to the walker is a heart not in perfect sympathy and accord with the body, — a reluctant or unwilling heart. The horse and rider must not only both be willing to go the same way, but the rider must lead the way and infuse his own lightness and eagerness into the steed. Herein is no doubt our trouble, and one reason of the decay of the noble art in this country. We are unwilling

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walkers. We are not innocent and simple-hearted enough to enjoy a walk. We have fallen from that state of grace which capacity to enjoy a walk implies. It cannot be said that as a people we are so positively sad, or morose, or melancholic, as that we are vacant of that sportiveness and surplusage of animal spirits that characterized our ancestors, and that springs from full and harmonious life, — a sound heart in accord with a sound body. A man must invest himself near at hand and in common things, and be content with a steady and moderate return, if he would know the blessedness of a cheerful heart and the sweetness of a walk over the round earth. This is a lesson the American has yet to learn, — capability of amusement on a low key. He expects rapid and extraordinary returns. He would make the very elemental laws pay usury. He has nothing to invest in a walk; it is too slow, too cheap. We crave the astonishing, the exciting, the far away, and do not know the highways of the gods when we see them, — always a sign of the decay of the faith and simplicity of man.

If I say to my neighbor, "Come with me, I have great wonders to show you," he pricks up his ears and comes forthwith; but when I take him on the hills under the full blaze of the sun, or along the country road, our footsteps lighted by the moon and stars, and say to him, "Behold, these are the wonders, these are the circuits of the gods, this we now

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tread is a morning star," he feels defrauded, and as if I had played him a trick. And yet nothing less than dilatation and enthusiasm like this is the badge of the master walker.

If we are not sad, we are careworn, hurried, discontented, mortgaging the present for the promise of the future. If we take a walk, it is as we take a prescription, with about the same relish and with about the same purpose; and the more the fatigue, the greater our faith in the virtue of the medicine.

Of those gleesome saunters over the hills in spring, or those sallies of the body in winter, those excursions into space when the foot strikes fire at every step, when the air tastes like a new and finer mixture, when we accumulate force and gladness as we go along, when the sight of objects by the roadside and of the fields and woods pleases more than pictures or than all the art in the world, — those ten or twelve mile dashes that are but the wit and effluence of the corporeal powers, — of such diversion and open road entertainment, I say, most of us know very little.

I notice with astonishment that at our fashionable watering-places nobody walks; that, of all those vast crowds of health-seekers and lovers of country air, you can never catch one in the fields or woods, or guilty of trudging along the country road with dust on his shoes and sun-tan on his hands and face. The sole amusement seems to be to eat and dress

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and sit about the hotels and glare at each other. The men look bored, the women look tired, and all seem to sigh, "O Lord! what shall we do to be happy and not be vulgar?" Quite different from our British cousins across the water, who have plenty of amusement and hilarity, spending most of the time at their watering-places in the open air, strolling, picnicking, boating, climbing, briskly walking, apparently with little fear of sun-tan or of compromising their "gentility."

It is indeed astonishing with what ease and hilarity the English walk. To an American it seems a kind of infatuation. When Dickens was in this country, I imagine the aspirants to the honor of a walk with him were not numerous. In a pedestrian tour of England by an American, I read that, "after breakfast with the Independent minister, he walked with us for six miles out of town upon our road. Three little boys and girls, the youngest six years old, also accompanied us. They were romping and rambling about all the while, and their morning walk must have been as much as fifteen miles; but they thought nothing of it, and when we parted were apparently as fresh as when they started, and very loath to return."

I fear, also, the American is becoming disqualified for the manly art of walking by a falling off in the size of his foot. He cherishes and cultivates this part of his anatomy, and apparently thinks his

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taste and good breeding are to be inferred from its diminutive size. A small, trim foot, well booted or gaitered, is the national vanity. How we stare at the big feet of foreigners, and wonder what may be the price of leather in those countries, and where all the aristocratic blood is, that these plebeian extremities so predominate! If we were admitted to the confidences of the shoemaker to Her Majesty or to His Royal Highness, no doubt we should modify our views upon this latter point, for a truly large and royal nature is never stunted in the extremities; a little foot never yet supported a great character.

It is said that Englishmen, when they first come to this country, are for some time under the impression that American women all have deformed feet, they are so coy of them and so studiously careful to keep them hid. That there is an astonishing difference between the women of the two countries in this respect, every traveler can testify; and that there is a difference equally astonishing between the pedestrian habits and capabilities of the rival sisters, is also certain.

The English pedestrian, no doubt, has the advantage of us in the matter of climate; for, notwithstanding the traditional gloom and moroseness of English skies, they have in that country none of those relaxing, sinking, enervating days, of which we have so many here, and which seem especially

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trying to the female constitution, — days which withdraw all support from the back and loins, and render walking of all things burdensome. Theirs is a climate of which it has been said that “it invites men abroad more days in the year and more hours in the day than that of any other country.”

Then their land is threaded with paths which invite the walker, and which are scarcely less important than the highways. I heard of a surly nobleman near London who took it into his head to close a footpath that passed through his estate near his house, and open another a little farther off. The pedestrians objected; the matter got into the courts, and after protracted litigation the aristocrat was beaten. The path could not be closed or moved. The memory of man ran not to the time when there was not a footpath there, and every pedestrian should have the right of way there still.

I remember the pleasure I had in the path that connects Stratford-on-Avon with Shottery, Shakespeare's path when he went courting Anne Hathaway. By the king's highway the distance is some farther, so there is a well-worn path along the hedges and through the meadows and turnip patches. The traveler in it has the privilege of crossing the railroad track, an unusual privilege in England, and one denied to the lord in his carriage, who must either go over or under it. (It is a privilege, is it not, to be allowed the forbidden, even if it be the

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privilege of being run over by the engine?) In strolling over the South Downs, too, I was delighted to find that where the hill was steepest some benefactor of the order of walkers had made notches in the sward, so that the foot could bite the better and firmer; the path became a kind of stairway, which I have no doubt the plowman respected.

When you see an English country church withdrawn, secluded, out of the reach of wheels, standing amid grassy graves and surrounded by noble trees, approached by paths and shaded lanes, you appreciate more than ever this beautiful habit of the people. Only a race that knows how to use its feet, and holds footpaths sacred, could put such a charm of privacy and humility into such a structure. I think I should be tempted to go to church myself if I saw all my neighbors starting off across the fields or along paths that led to such charmed spots, and were sure I should not be jostled or run over by the rival chariots of the worshipers at the temple doors. I think that is what ails our religion; humility and devoutness of heart leave one when he lays by his walking shoes and walking clothes, and sets out for church drawn by something.

Indeed, I think it would be tantamount to an astonishing revival of religion if the people would all walk to church on Sunday and walk home again. Think how the stones would preach to them by the wayside; how their benumbed minds would warm

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up beneath the friction of the gravel; how their vain and foolish thoughts, their desponding thoughts, their besetting demons of one kind and another, would drop behind them, unable to keep up or to endure the fresh air! They would walk away from their *ennui*, their worldly cares, their uncharitableness, their pride of dress; for these devils always want to ride, while the simple virtues are never so happy as when on foot. Let us walk by all means; but if we will ride, get an ass.

Then the English claim that they are a more hearty and robust people than we are. It is certain they are a plainer people, have plainer tastes, dress plainer, build plainer, speak plainer, keep closer to facts, wear broader shoes and coarser clothes, and place a lower estimate on themselves, — all of which traits favor pedestrian habits. The English grandee is not confined to his carriage; but if the American aristocrat leaves his, he is ruined. Oh the weariness, the emptiness, the plotting, the seeking rest and finding none, that go by in the carriages! while your pedestrian is always cheerful, alert, refreshed, with his heart in his hand and his hand free to all. He looks down upon nobody; he is on the common level. His pores are all open, his circulation is active, his digestion good. His heart is not cold, nor are his faculties asleep. He is the only real traveler; he alone tastes the “gay, fresh sentiment of the road.” He is not isolated, but is at one with things,

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with the farms and the industries on either hand. The vital, universal currents play through him. He knows the ground is alive; he feels the pulses of the wind, and reads the mute language of things. His sympathies are all aroused; his senses are continually reporting messages to his mind. Wind, frost, rain, heat, cold, are something to him. He is not merely a spectator of the panorama of nature, but a participator in it. He experiences the country he passes through, — tastes it, feels it, absorbs it; the traveler in his fine carriage sees it merely. This gives the fresh charm to that class of books that may be called "Views Afoot," and to the narratives of hunters, naturalists, exploring parties, etc. The walker does not need a large territory. When you get into a railway car you want a continent, the man in his carriage requires a township; but a walker like Thoreau finds as much and more along the shores of Walden Pond. The former, as it were, has merely time to glance at the headings of the chapters, while the latter need not miss a line, and Thoreau reads between the lines. Then the walker has the privilege of the fields, the woods, the hills, the byways. The apples by the roadside are for him, and the berries, and the spring of water, and the friendly shelter; and if the weather is cold, he eats the frost grapes and the persimmons, or even the white-meated turnip, snatched from the field he passed through, with incredible relish.

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Afoot and in the open road, one has a fair start in life at last. There is no hindrance now. Let him put his best foot forward. He is on the broadest human plane. This is on the level of all the great laws and heroic deeds. From this platform he is eligible to any good fortune. He was sighing for the golden age; let him walk to it. Every step brings him nearer. The youth of the world is but a few days' journey distant. Indeed, I know persons who think they have walked back to that fresh aforetime of a single bright Sunday in autumn or early spring. Before noon they felt its airs upon their cheeks, and by nightfall, on the banks of some quiet stream, or along some path in the wood, or on some hilltop, aver they have heard the voices and felt the wonder and the mystery that so enchanted the early races of men.

I think if I could walk through a country, I should not only see many things and have adventures that I should otherwise miss, but that I should come into relations with that country at first hand, and with the men and women in it, in a way that would afford the deepest satisfaction. Hence I envy the good fortune of all walkers, and feel like joining myself to every tramp that comes along. I am jealous of the clergyman I read about the other day, who footed it from Edinburgh to London, as poor Effie Deans did, carrying her shoes in her hand most of the way, and over the ground that rugged

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Ben Jonson strode, larking it to Scotland, so long ago. I read with longing of the pedestrian feats of college youths, so gay and light-hearted, with their coarse shoes on their feet and their knapsacks on their backs. It would have been a good draught of the rugged cup to have walked with Wilson the ornithologist, deserted by his companions, from Niagara to Philadelphia through the snows of winter. I almost wish that I had been born to the career of a German mechanic, that I might have had that delicious adventurous year of wandering over my country before I settled down to work. I think how much richer and firmer-grained life would be to me if I could journey afoot through Florida and Texas, or follow the windings of the Platte or the Yellowstone, or stroll through Oregon, or browse for a season about Canada. In the bright, inspiring days of autumn I only want the time and the companion to walk back to the natal spot, the family nest, across two States and into the mountains of a third. What adventures we would have by the way, what hard pulls, what prospects from hills, what spectacles we would behold of night and day, what passages with dogs, what glances, what peeps into windows, what characters we should fall in with, and how seasoned and hardy we should arrive at our destination!

For companion I should want a veteran of the war! Those marches put something into him I

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like. Even at this distance his mettle is but little softened. As soon as he gets warmed up, it all comes back to him. He catches your step and away you go, a gay, adventurous, half-predatory couple. How quickly he falls into the old ways of jest and anecdote and song! You may have known him for years without having heard him hum an air, or more than casually revert to the subject of his experience during the war. You have even questioned and cross-questioned him without firing the train you wished. But get him out on a vacation tramp, and you can walk it all out of him. By the camp-fire at night, or swinging along the streams by day, song, anecdote, adventure, come to the surface, and you wonder how your companion has kept silent so long.

It is another proof of how walking brings out the true character of a man. The devil never yet asked his victims to take a walk with him. You will not be long in finding your companion out. All disguises will fall away from him. As his pores open his character is laid bare. His deepest and most private self will come to the top. It matters little with whom you ride, so he be not a pickpocket; for both of you will, very likely, settle down closer and firmer in your reserve, shaken down like a measure of corn by the jolting as the journey proceeds. But walking is a more vital copartnership; the relation is a closer and more sympathetic one, and you do

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not feel like walking ten paces with a stranger without speaking to him.

Hence the fastidiousness of the professional walker in choosing or admitting a companion, and hence the truth of a remark of Emerson, that you will generally fare better to take your dog than to invite your neighbor. Your cur-dog is a true pedestrian, and your neighbor is very likely a small politician. The dog enters thoroughly into the spirit of the enterprise; he is not indifferent or preoccupied; he is constantly sniffing adventure, laps at every spring, looks upon every field and wood as a new world to be explored, is ever on some fresh trail, knows something important will happen a little farther on, gazes with the true wonder-seeing eyes, whatever the spot or whatever the road finds it good to be there, — in short, is just that happy, delicious, excursive vagabond that touches one at so many points, and whose human prototype in a companion robs miles and leagues of half their power to fatigue.

Persons who find themselves spent in a short walk to the market or the post-office, or to do a little shopping, wonder how it is that their pedestrian friends can compass so many weary miles and not fall down from sheer exhaustion; ignorant of the fact that the walker is a kind of projectile that drops far or near according to the expansive force of the motive that set it in motion, and that it is easy enough to regulate the charge according to the dis-

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tance to be traversed. If I am loaded to carry only one mile and am compelled to walk three, I generally feel more fatigue than if I had walked six under the proper impetus of preadjusted resolution. In other words, the will or corporeal mainspring, whatever it be, is capable of being wound up to different degrees of tension, so that one may walk all day nearly as easy as half that time, if he is prepared beforehand. He knows his task, and he measures and distributes his powers accordingly. It is for this reason that an unknown road is always a long road. We cannot cast the mental eye along it and see the end from the beginning. We are fighting in the dark, and cannot take the measure of our foe. Every step must be preordained and provided for in the mind. Hence also the fact that to vanquish one mile in the woods seems equal to compassing three in the open country. The furlongs are ambushed, and we magnify them.

Then, again, how annoying to be told it is only five miles to the next place when it is really eight or ten! We fall short nearly half the distance, and are compelled to urge and roll the spent ball the rest of the way. In such a case walking degenerates from a fine art to a mechanic art; we walk merely; to get over the ground becomes the one serious and engrossing thought; whereas success in walking is not to let your right foot know what your left foot doeth. Your heart must furnish such

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music that in keeping time to it your feet will carry you around the globe without knowing it. The walker I would describe takes no note of distance; his walk is a sally, a *bonmot*, an unspoken *jeu d'esprit*; the ground is his butt, his provocation; it furnishes him the resistance his body craves; he rebounds upon it, he glances off and returns again, and uses it gayly as his tool.

I do not think I exaggerate the importance or the charms of pedestrianism, or our need as a people to cultivate the art. I think it would tend to soften the national manners, to teach us the meaning of leisure, to acquaint us with the charms of the open air, to strengthen and foster the tie between the race and the land. No one else looks out upon the world so kindly and charitably as the pedestrian; no one else gives and takes so much from the country he passes through. Next to the laborer in the fields, the walker holds the closest relation to the soil; and he holds a closer and more vital relation to nature because he is freer and his mind more at leisure.

Man takes root at his feet, and at best he is no more than a potted plant in his house or carriage till he has established communication with the soil by the loving and magnetic touch of his soles to it. Then the tie of association is born; then spring those invisible fibres and rootlets through which character comes to smack of the soil, and which

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make a man kindred to the spot of earth he inhabits.

The roads and paths you have walked along in summer and winter weather, the fields and hills which you have looked upon in lightness and gladness of heart, where fresh thoughts have come into your mind, or some noble prospect has opened before you, and especially the quiet ways where you have walked in sweet converse with your friend, pausing under the trees, drinking at the spring, — henceforth they are not the same; a new charm is added; those thoughts spring there perennial, your friend walks there forever.

We have produced some good walkers and saunterers, and some noted climbers; but as a staple recreation, as a daily practice, the mass of the people dislike and despise walking. Thoreau said he was a good horse, but a poor roadster. I chant the virtues of the roadster as well. I sing of the sweetness of gravel, good sharp quartz-grit. It is the proper condiment for the sterner seasons, and many a human gizzard would be cured of half its ills by a suitable daily allowance of it. I think Thoreau himself would have profited immensely by it. His diet was too exclusively vegetable. A man cannot live on grass alone. If one has been a lotus-eater all summer, he must turn gravel-eater in the fall and winter. Those who have tried it know that gravel possesses an equal though an opposite charm.

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It spurs to action. The foot tastes it and henceforth rests not. The joy of moving and surmounting, of attrition and progression, the thirst for space, for miles and leagues of distance, for sights and prospects, to cross mountains and thread rivers, and defy frost, heat, snow, danger, difficulties, seizes it; and from that day forth its possessor is enrolled in the noble army of walkers.

III

THE SNOW-WALKERS

HE who marvels at the beauty of the world in summer will find equal cause for wonder and admiration in winter. It is true the pomp and the pageantry are swept away, but the essential elements remain, — the day and the night, the mountain and the valley, the elemental play and succession and the perpetual presence of the infinite sky. In winter the stars seem to have rekindled their fires, the moon achieves a fuller triumph, and the heavens wear a look of a more exalted simplicity. Summer is more wooing and seductive, more versatile and human, appeals to the affections and the sentiments, and fosters inquiry and the art impulse. Winter is of a more heroic cast, and addresses the intellect. The severe studies and disciplines come easier in winter. One imposes larger tasks upon himself, and is less tolerant of his own weaknesses.

The tendinous part of the mind, so to speak, is more developed in winter; the fleshy, in summer. I should say winter had given the bone and sinew to Literature, summer the tissues and blood.

The simplicity of winter has a deep moral. The

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return of nature, after such a career of splendor and prodigality, to habits so simple and austere, is not lost upon either the head or the heart. It is the philosopher coming back from the banquet and the wine to a cup of water and a crust of bread.

And then this beautiful masquerade of the elements, — the novel disguises our nearest friends put on! Here is another rain and another dew, water that will not flow, nor spill, nor receive the taint of an unclean vessel. And if we see truly, the same old beneficence and willingness to serve lurk beneath all.

Look up at the miracle of the falling snow, — the air a dizzy maze of whirling, eddying flakes, noiselessly transforming the world, the exquisite crystals dropping in ditch and gutter, and disguising in the same suit of spotless livery all objects upon which they fall. How novel and fine the first drifts! The old, dilapidated fence is suddenly set off with the most fantastic ruffles, scalloped and fluted after an unheard-of fashion! Looking down a long line of decrepit stone wall, in the trimming of which the wind had fairly run riot, I saw, as for the first time, what a severe yet master artist old Winter is. Ah, a severe artist! How stern the woods look, dark and cold and as rigid against the horizon as iron!

All life and action upon the snow have an added emphasis and significance. Every expression is underscored. Summer has few finer pictures than

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this winter one of the farmer foddering his cattle from a stack upon the clean snow, — the movement, the sharply defined figures, the great green flakes of hay, the long file of patient cows, the advance just arriving and pressing eagerly for the choicest morsels, — and the bounty and providence it suggests. Or the chopper in the woods, — the prostrate tree, the white new chips scattered about, his easy triumph over the cold, his coat hanging to a limb, and the clear, sharp ring of his axe. The woods are rigid and tense, keyed up by the frost, and resound like a stringed instrument. Or the road-breakers, sallying forth with oxen and sleds in the still, white world, the day after the storm, to restore the lost track and demolish the beleaguering drifts.

All sounds are sharper in winter; the air transmits better. At night I hear more distinctly the steady roar of the North Mountain. In summer it is a sort of complacent purr, as the breezes stroke down its sides; but in winter always the same low, sullen growl.

A severe artist! No longer the canvas and the pigments, but the marble and the chisel. When the nights are calm and the moon full, I go out to gaze upon the wonderful purity of the moonlight and the snow. The air is full of latent fire, and the cold warms me — after a different fashion from that of the kitchen stove. The world lies about me in a “trance of snow.” The clouds are pearly and

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iridescent, and seem the farthest possible remove from the condition of a storm, — the ghosts of clouds, the indwelling beauty freed from all dross. I see the hills, bulging with great drifts, lift themselves up cold and white against the sky, the black lines of fences here and there obliterated by the depth of the snow. Presently a fox barks away up next the mountain, and I imagine I can almost see him sitting there, in his furs, upon the illuminated surface, and looking down in my direction. As I listen, one answers him from behind the woods in the valley. What a wild winter sound, wild and weird, up among the ghostly hills! Since the wolf has ceased to howl upon these mountains, and the panther to scream, there is nothing to be compared with it. So wild! I get up in the middle of the night to hear it. It is refreshing to the ear, and one delights to know that such wild creatures are among us. At this season Nature makes the most of every throb of life that can withstand her severity. How heartily she indorses this fox! In what bold relief stand out the lives of all walkers of the snow! The snow is a great tell-tale, and blabs as effectually as it obliterates. I go into the woods, and know all that has happened. I cross the fields, and if only a mouse has visited his neighbor, the fact is chronicled.

The red fox is the only species that abounds in my locality; the little gray fox seems to prefer a

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more rocky and precipitous country, and a less rigorous climate; the cross fox is occasionally seen, and there are traditions of the silver gray among the oldest hunters. But the red fox is the sportsman's prize, and the only fur-bearer worthy of note in these mountains.¹ I go out in the morning, after a fresh fall of snow, and see at all points where he has crossed the road. Here he has leisurely passed within rifle-range of the house, evidently reconnoitring the premises with an eye to the hen-roost. That clear, sharp track, — there is no mistaking it for the clumsy footprint of a little dog. All his wildness and agility are photographed in it. Here he has taken fright, or suddenly recollected an engagement, and in long, graceful leaps, barely touching the fence, has gone careering up the hill as fleet as the wind.

The wild, buoyant creature, how beautiful he is! I had often seen his dead carcass, and at a distance had witnessed the hounds drive him across the upper fields; but the thrill and excitement of meeting him in his wild freedom in the woods were unknown to me till, one cold winter day, drawn thither by the baying of a hound, I stood near the summit of the mountain, waiting a renewal of the sound, that I might determine the course of the dog and choose my position, — stimulated by the ambition of all young Nimrods to bag some notable game. Long

¹ A spur of the Catskills.

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I waited, and patiently, till, chilled and benumbed, I was about to turn back, when, hearing a slight noise, I looked up and beheld a most superb fox, loping along with inimitable grace and ease, evidently disturbed, but not pursued by the hound, and so absorbed in his private meditations that he failed to see me, though I stood transfixed with amazement and admiration, not ten yards distant. I took his measure at a glance, — a large male, with dark legs, and massive tail tipped with white, — a most magnificent creature; but so astonished and fascinated was I by this sudden appearance and matchless beauty, that not till I had caught the last glimpse of him, as he disappeared over a knoll, did I awake to my duty as a sportsman, and realize what an opportunity to distinguish myself I had unconsciously let slip. I clutched my gun, half angrily, as if it was to blame, and went home out of humor with myself and all fox-kind. But I have since thought better of the experience, and concluded that I bagged the game after all, the best part of it, and fleeced Reynard of something more valuable than his fur, without his knowledge.

This is thoroughly a winter sound, — this voice of the hound upon the mountain, — and one that is music to many ears. The long trumpet-like bay, heard for a mile or more, — now faintly back in the deep recesses of the mountain, — now distinct, but still faint, as the hound comes over some prominent

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point and the wind favors, — anon entirely lost in the gully, — then breaking out again much nearer, and growing more and more pronounced as the dog approaches, till, when he comes around the brow of the mountain, directly above you, the barking is loud and sharp. On he goes along the northern spur, his voice rising and sinking as the wind and the lay of the ground modify it, till lost to hearing.

The fox usually keeps half a mile ahead, regulating his speed by that of the hound, occasionally pausing a moment to divert himself with a mouse, or to contemplate the landscape, or to listen for his pursuer. If the hound press him too closely, he leads off from mountain to mountain, and so generally escapes the hunter; but if the pursuit be slow, he plays about some ridge or peak, and falls a prey, though not an easy one, to the experienced sportsman.

A most spirited and exciting chase occurs when the farm-dog gets close upon one in the open field, as sometimes happens in the early morning. The fox relies so confidently upon his superior speed, that I imagine he half tempts the dog to the race. But if the dog be a smart one, and their course lie downhill, over smooth ground, Reynard must put his best foot forward, and then sometimes suffer the ignominy of being run over by his pursuer, who, however, is quite unable to pick him up, owing to

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the speed. But when they mount the hill, or enter the woods, the superior nimbleness and agility of the fox tell at once, and he easily leaves the dog far in his rear. For a cur less than his own size he manifests little fear, especially if the two meet alone, remote from the house. In such cases, I have seen first one turn tail, then the other.

A novel spectacle often occurs in summer, when the female has young. You are rambling on the mountain, accompanied by your dog, when you are startled by that wild, half-threatening squall, and in a moment perceive your dog, with inverted tail, and shame and confusion in his looks, sneaking toward you, the old fox but a few rods in his rear. You speak to him sharply, when he bristles up, turns about, and, barking, starts off vigorously, as if to wipe out the dishonor; but in a moment comes sneaking back more abashed than ever, and owns himself unworthy to be called a dog. The fox fairly shames him out of the woods. The secret of the matter is her sex, though her conduct, for the honor of the fox be it said, seems to be prompted only by solicitude for the safety of her young.

One of the most notable features of the fox is his large and massive tail. Seen running on the snow at a distance, his tail is quite as conspicuous as his body; and, so far from appearing a burden, seems to contribute to his lightness and buoyancy. It softens the outline of his movements, and repeats or

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continues to the eye the ease and poise of his carriage. But, pursued by the hound on a wet, thawy day, it often becomes so heavy and bedraggled as to prove a serious inconvenience, and compels him to take refuge in his den. He is very loath to do this; both his pride and the traditions of his race stimulate him to run it out, and win by fair superiority of wind and speed; and only a wound or a heavy and moppish tail will drive him to avoid the issue in this manner.

To learn his surpassing shrewdness and cunning, attempt to take him with a trap. Rogue that he is, he always suspects some trick, and one must be more of a fox than he is himself to overreach him. At first sight it would appear easy enough. With apparent indifference he crosses your path, or walks in your footsteps in the field, or travels along the beaten highway, or lingers in the vicinity of stacks and remote barns. Carry the carcass of a pig, or a fowl, or a dog, to a distant field in midwinter, and in a few nights his tracks cover the snow about it.

The inexperienced country youth, misled by this seeming carelessness of Reynard, suddenly conceives a project to enrich himself with fur, and wonders that the idea has not occurred to him before, and to others. I knew a youthful yeoman of this kind, who imagined he had found a mine of wealth on discovering on a remote side-hill, between two woods,

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a dead porker, upon which it appeared all the foxes of the neighborhood had nightly banqueted. The clouds were burdened with snow; and as the first flakes commenced to eddy down, he set out, trap and broom in hand, already counting over in imagination the silver quarters he would receive for his first fox-skin. With the utmost care, and with a palpitating heart, he removed enough of the trodden snow to allow the trap to sink below the surface. Then, carefully sifting the light element over it and sweeping his tracks full, he quickly withdrew, laughing exultingly over the little surprise he had prepared for the cunning rogue. The elements conspired to aid him, and the falling snow rapidly obliterated all vestiges of his work. The next morning at dawn he was on his way to bring in his fur. The snow had done its work effectually, and, he believed, had kept his secret well. Arrived in sight of the locality, he strained his vision to make out his prize lodged against the fence at the foot of the hill. Approaching nearer, the surface was unbroken, and doubt usurped the place of certainty in his mind. A slight mound marked the site of the porker, but there was no footprint near it. Looking up the hill, he saw where Reynard had walked leisurely down toward his wonted bacon till within a few yards of it, when he had wheeled, and with prodigious strides disappeared in the woods. The young trapper saw at a glance what a comment this

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was upon his skill in the art, and, indignantly exhuming the iron, he walked home with it, the stream of silver quarters suddenly setting in another direction.

The successful trapper commences in the fall, or before the first deep snow. In a field not too remote, with an old axe he cuts a small place, say ten inches by fourteen, in the frozen ground, and removes the earth to the depth of three or four inches, then fills the cavity with dry ashes, in which are placed bits of roasted cheese. Reynard is very suspicious at first, and gives the place a wide berth. It looks like design, and he will see how the thing behaves before he approaches too near. But the cheese is savory and the cold severe. He ventures a little closer every night, until he can reach and pick a piece from the surface. Emboldened by success, like other mortals, he presently digs freely among the ashes, and, finding a fresh supply of the delectable morsels every night, is soon thrown off his guard and his suspicions quite lulled. After a week of baiting in this manner, and on the eve of a light fall of snow, the trapper carefully conceals his trap in the bed, first smoking it thoroughly with hemlock boughs to kill or neutralize the smell of the iron. If the weather favors and the proper precautions have been taken, he may succeed, though the chances are still greatly against him.

Reynard is usually caught very lightly, seldom

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more than the ends of his toes being between the jaws. He sometimes works so cautiously as to spring the trap without injury even to his toes, or may remove the cheese night after night without even springing it. I knew an old trapper who, on finding himself outwitted in this manner, tied a bit of cheese to the pan, and next morning had poor Reynard by the jaw. The trap is not fastened, but only encumbered with a clog, and is all the more sure in its hold by yielding to every effort of the animal to extricate himself.

When Reynard sees his captor approaching, he would fain drop into a mouse-hole to render himself invisible. He crouches to the ground and remains perfectly motionless until he perceives himself discovered, when he makes one desperate and final effort to escape, but ceases all struggling as you come up, and behaves in a manner that stamps him a very timid warrior, — cowering to the earth with a mingled look of shame, guilt, and abject fear. A young farmer told me of tracing one with his trap to the border of a wood, where he discovered the cunning rogue trying to hide by embracing a small tree. Most animals, when taken in a trap, show fight; but Reynard has more faith in the nimbleness of his feet than in the terror of his teeth.

Entering the woods, the number and variety of the tracks contrast strongly with the rigid, frozen aspect of things. Warm jets of life still shoot and

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play amid this snowy desolation. Fox-tracks are far less numerous than in the fields; but those of hares, skunks, partridges, squirrels, and mice abound. The mice tracks are very pretty, and look like a sort of fantastic stitching on the coverlid of the snow. One is curious to know what brings these tiny creatures from their retreats; they do not seem to be in quest of food, but rather to be traveling about for pleasure or sociability, though always going post-haste, and linking stump with stump and tree with tree by fine, hurried strides. That is when they travel openly; but they have hidden passages and winding galleries under the snow, which undoubtedly are their main avenues of communication. Here and there these passages rise so near the surface as to be covered by only a frail arch of snow, and a slight ridge betrays their course to the eye. I know him well. He is known to the farmer as the "deer mouse," to the naturalist as the white-footed mouse, — a very beautiful creature, nocturnal in his habits, with large ears, and large, fine eyes full of a wild, harmless look. He is daintily marked, with white feet and a white belly. When disturbed by day he is very easily captured, having none of the cunning or viciousness of the common Old World mouse.

It is he who, high in the hollow trunk of some tree, lays by a store of beechnuts for winter use. Every nut is carefully shelled, and the cavity that

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serves as storehouse lined with grass and leaves. The wood-chopper frequently squanders this precious store. I have seen half a peck taken from one tree, as clean and white as if put up by the most delicate hands, — as they were. How long it must have taken the little creature to collect this quantity, to hull them one by one, and convey them up to his fifth-story chamber! He is not confined to the woods, but is quite as common in the fields, particularly in the fall, amid the corn and potatoes. When routed by the plow, I have seen the old one take flight with half a dozen young hanging to her teats, and with such reckless speed that some of the young would lose their hold and fly off amid the weeds. Taking refuge in a stump with the rest of her family, the anxious mother would presently come back and hunt up the missing ones.

The snow-walkers are mostly night-walkers also, and the record they leave upon the snow is the main clew one has to their life and doings. The hare is nocturnal in its habits, and though a very lively creature at night, with regular courses and run-ways through the wood, is entirely quiet by day. Timid as he is, he makes little effort to conceal himself, usually squatting beside a log, stump, or tree, and seeming to avoid rocks and ledges, where he might be partially housed from the cold and the snow, but where also — and this consideration undoubtedly determines his choice—he would be more apt

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to fall a prey to his enemies. In this, as well as in many other respects, he differs from the rabbit proper: he never burrows in the ground, or takes refuge in a den or hole, when pursued. If caught in the open fields, he is much confused and easily overtaken by the dog; but in the woods, he leaves him at a bound. In summer, when first disturbed, he beats the ground violently with his feet, by which means he would express to you his surprise or displeasure; it is a dumb way he has of scolding. After leaping a few yards, he pauses an instant, as if to determine the degree of danger, and then hurries away with a much lighter tread.

His feet are like great pads, and his track has little of the sharp, articulated expression of Reynard's, or of animals that climb or dig. Yet it is very pretty like all the rest, and tells its own tale. There is nothing bold or vicious or vulpine in it, and his timid, harmless character is published at every leap. He abounds in dense woods, preferring localities filled with a small undergrowth of beech and birch, upon the bark of which he feeds. Nature is rather partial to him, and matches his extreme local habits and character with a suit that corresponds with his surroundings, — reddish gray in summer and white in winter.

The sharp-rayed track of the partridge adds another figure to this fantastic embroidery upon the winter snow. Her course is a clear, strong line,

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sometimes quite wayward, but generally very direct, steering for the densest, most impenetrable places, — leading you over logs and through brush, alert and expectant, till, suddenly, she bursts up a few yards from you, and goes humming through the trees, — the complete triumph of endurance and vigor. Hardy native bird, may your tracks never be fewer, or your visits to the birch-tree less frequent!

The squirrel tracks — sharp, nervous, and wiry — have their histories also. But how rarely we see squirrels in winter! The naturalists say they are mostly torpid; yet evidently that little pocket-faced depredator, the chipmunk, was not carrying buckwheat for so many days to his hole for nothing: was he anticipating a state of torpidity, or providing against the demands of a very active appetite? Red and gray squirrels are more or less active all winter, though very shy, and, I am inclined to think, partially nocturnal in their habits. Here a gray one has just passed, — came down that tree and went up this; there he dug for a beechnut, and left the burr on the snow. How did he know where to dig? During an unusually severe winter I have known him to make long journeys to a barn, in a remote field, where wheat was stored. How did he know there was wheat there? In attempting to return, the adventurous creature was frequently run down and caught in the deep snow.

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His home is in the trunk of some old birch or maple, with an entrance far up amid the branches. In the spring he builds himself a summer-house of small leafy twigs in the top of a neighboring beech, where the young are reared and much of the time is passed. But the safer retreat in the maple is not abandoned, and both old and young resort thither in the fall, or when danger threatens. Whether this temporary residence amid the branches is for elegance or pleasure, or for sanitary reasons or domestic convenience, the naturalist has forgotten to mention.

The elegant creature, so cleanly in its habits, so graceful in its carriage, so nimble and daring in its movements, excites feelings of admiration akin to those awakened by the birds and the fairer forms of nature. His passage through the trees is almost a flight. Indeed, the flying squirrel has little or no advantage over him, and in speed and nimbleness cannot compare with him at all. If he miss his footing and fall, he is sure to catch on the next branch; if the connection be broken, he leaps recklessly for the nearest spray or limb, and secures his hold, even if it be by the aid of his teeth.

His career of frolic and festivity begins in the fall, after the birds have left us and the holiday spirit of nature has commenced to subside. How absorbing the pastime of the sportsman who goes to the woods in the still October morning in quest

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of him! You step lightly across the threshold of the forest, and sit down upon the first log or rock to await the signals. It is so still that the ear suddenly seems to have acquired new powers, and there is no movement to confuse the eye. Presently you hear the rustling of a branch, and see it sway or spring as the squirrel leaps from or to it; or else you hear a disturbance in the dry leaves, and mark one running upon the ground. He has probably seen the intruder, and, not liking his stealthy movements, desires to avoid a nearer acquaintance. Now he mounts a stump to see if the way is clear, then pauses a moment at the foot of a tree to take his bearings, his tail, as he skims along, undulating behind him, and adding to the easy grace and dignity of his movements. Or else you are first advised of his proximity by the dropping of a false nut, or the fragments of the shucks rattling upon the leaves. Or, again, after contemplating you awhile unobserved, and making up his mind that you are not dangerous, he strikes an attitude on a branch, and commences to quack and bark, with an accompanying movement of his tail. Late in the afternoon, when the same stillness reigns, the same scenes are repeated. There is a black variety, quite rare, but mating freely with the gray, from which he seems to be distinguished only in color.

The track of the red squirrel may be known by its smaller size. He is more common and less dig-

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nified than the gray, and oftener guilty of petty larceny about the barns and grain-fields. He is most abundant in old barkpeelings, and low, dilapidated hemlocks, from which he makes excursions to the fields and orchards, spinning along the tops of the fences, which afford not only convenient lines of communication, but a safe retreat if danger threatens. He loves to linger about the orchard; and, sitting upright on the topmost stone in the wall, or on the tallest stake in the fence, chipping up an apple for the seeds, his tail conforming to the curve of his back, his paws shifting and turning the apple, he is a pretty sight, and his bright, pert appearance atones for all the mischief he does. At home, in the woods, he is the most frolicsome and loquacious. The appearance of anything unusual, if, after contemplating it a moment, he concludes it not dangerous, excites his unbounded mirth and ridicule, and he snickers and chatters, hardly able to contain himself; now darting up the trunk of a tree and squealing in derision, then hopping into position on a limb and dancing to the music of his own cackle, and all for your special benefit.

There is something very human in this apparent mirth and mockery of the squirrels. It seems to be a sort of ironical laughter, and implies self-conscious pride and exultation in the laughter. "What a ridiculous thing you are, to be sure!" he seems to say; "how clumsy and awkward, and what a poor

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show for a tail! Look at me, look at me!" — and he capers about in his best style. Again, he would seem to tease you and provoke your attention; then suddenly assumes a tone of good-natured, childlike defiance and derision. That pretty little imp, the chipmunk, will sit on the stone above his den and defy you, as plainly as if he said so, to catch him before he can get into his hole if you can. You hurl a stone at him, and "No you did n't!" comes up from the depth of his retreat.

In February another track appears upon the snow, slender and delicate, about a third larger than that of the gray squirrel, indicating no haste or speed, but, on the contrary, denoting the most imperturbable ease and leisure, the footprints so close together that the trail appears like a chain of curiously carved links. Sir *Mephitis mephitis*, or, in plain English, the skunk, has awakened from his six weeks' nap, and come out into society again. He is a nocturnal traveler, very bold and impudent, coming quite up to the barn and outbuildings, and sometimes taking up his quarters for the season under the haymow. There is no such word as hurry in his dictionary, as you may see by his path upon the snow. He has a very sneaking, insinuating way, and goes creeping about the fields and woods, never once in a perceptible degree altering his gait, and, if a fence crosses his course, steers for a break or opening to avoid climbing. He is too indolent

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even to dig his own hole, but appropriates that of a woodchuck, or hunts out a crevice in the rocks, from which he extends his rambling in all directions, preferring damp, thawy weather. He has very little discretion or cunning, and holds a trap in utter contempt, stepping into it as soon as beside it, relying implicitly for defense against all forms of danger upon the unsavory punishment he is capable of inflicting. He is quite indifferent to both man and beast, and will not hurry himself to get out of the way of either. Walking through the summer fields at twilight, I have come near stepping upon him, and was much the more disturbed of the two. When attacked in the open field he confounds the plans of his enemies by the unheard-of tactics of exposing his rear rather than his front. "Come if you dare," he says, and his attitude makes even the farm-dog pause. After a few encounters of this kind, and if you entertain the usual hostility towards him, your mode of attack will speedily resolve itself into moving about him in a circle, the radius of which will be the exact distance at which you can hurl a stone with accuracy and effect.

He has a secret to keep and knows it, and is careful not to betray himself until he can do so with the most telling effect. I have known him to preserve his serenity even when caught in a steel trap, and look the very picture of injured innocence.

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manœuvring carefully and deliberately to extricate his foot from the grasp of the naughty jaws. Do not by any means take pity on him, and lend a helping hand!

How pretty his face and head! How fine and delicate his teeth, like a weasel's or a cat's! When about a third grown, he looks so well that one covets him for a pet. He is quite precocious, however, and capable, even at this tender age, of making a very strong appeal to your sense of smell.

No animal is more cleanly in his habits than he. He is not an awkward boy who cuts his own face with his whip; and neither his flesh nor his fur hints the weapon with which he is armed. The most silent creature known to me, he makes no sound, so far as I have observed, save a diffuse, impatient noise, like that produced by beating your hand with a whisk-broom, when the farm-dog has discovered his retreat in the stone fence. He renders himself obnoxious to the farmer by his partiality for hens' eggs and young poultry. He is a confirmed epicure, and at plundering hen-roosts an expert. Not the full-grown fowls are his victims, but the youngest and most tender. At night Mother Hen receives under her maternal wings a dozen newly hatched chickens, and with much pride and satisfaction feels them all safely tucked away in her feathers. In the morning she is walking about disconsolately, attended by only two or three of all

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that pretty brood. What has happened? Where are they gone? That pickpocket, Sir Mephitis, could solve the mystery. Quietly has he approached, under cover of darkness, and one by one relieved her of her precious charge. Look closely and you will see their little yellow legs and beaks, or part of a mangled form, lying about on the ground. Or, before the hen has hatched, he may find her out, and, by the same sleight of hand, remove every egg, leaving only the empty blood-stained shells to witness against him. The birds, especially the ground-builders, suffer in like manner from his plundering propensities.

The secretion upon which he relies for defense, and which is the chief source of his unpopularity, while it affords good reasons against cultivating him as a pet, and mars his attractiveness as game, is by no means the greatest indignity that can be offered to a nose. It is a rank, living smell, and has none of the sickening qualities of disease or putrefaction. Indeed, I think a good smeller will enjoy its most refined intensity. It approaches the sublime, and makes the nose tingle. It is tonic and bracing, and, I can readily believe, has rare medicinal qualities. I do not recommend its use as eyewater, though an old farmer assures me it has undoubted virtues when thus applied. Hearing, one night, a disturbance among his hens, he rushed suddenly out to catch the thief, when Sir Mephitis, taken by surprise, and

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no doubt much annoyed at being interrupted, discharged the vials of his wrath full in the farmer's face, and with such admirable effect that, for a few moments, he was completely blinded, and powerless to revenge himself upon the rogue, who embraced the opportunity to make good his escape; but he declared that afterwards his eyes felt as if purged by fire, and his sight was much clearer.

In March that brief summary of a bear, the raccoon, comes out of his den in the ledges, and leaves his sharp digitigrade track upon the snow, — traveling not unfrequently in pairs, — a lean, hungry couple, bent on pillage and plunder. They have an unenviable time of it, — feasting in the summer and fall, hibernating in winter, and starving in spring. In April I have found the young of the previous year creeping about the fields, so reduced by starvation as to be quite helpless, and offering no resistance to my taking them up by the tail and carrying them home.

The old ones also become very much emaciated, and come boldly up to the barn or other outbuildings in quest of food. I remember, one morning in early spring, of hearing old Cuff, the farm-dog, barking vociferously before it was yet light. When we got up we discovered him, at the foot of an ash-tree standing about thirty rods from the house, looking up at some gray object in the leafless branches, and by his manners and his voice evincing great impa-

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tience that we were so tardy in coming to his assistance. Arrived on the spot, we saw in the tree a coon of unusual size. One bold climber proposed to go up and shake him down. This was what old Cuff wanted, and he fairly bounded with delight as he saw his young master shinning up the tree. Approaching within eight or ten feet of the coon, he seized the branch to which it clung and shook long and fiercely. But the coon was in no danger of losing its hold, and, when the climber paused to renew his hold, it turned toward him with a growl, and showed very clearly a purpose to advance to the attack. This caused his pursuer to descend to the ground with all speed. When the coon was finally brought down with a gun, he fought the dog, which was a large, powerful animal, with great fury, returning bite for bite for some moments; and after a quarter of an hour had elapsed and his unequal antagonist had shaken him as a terrier does a rat, making his teeth meet through the small of his back, the coon still showed fight.

They are very tenacious of life, and like the badger will always whip a dog of their own size and weight. A woodchuck can bite severely, having teeth that cut like chisels, but a coon has agility and power of limb as well.

They are considered game only in the fall, or towards the close of summer, when they become fat and their flesh sweet. At this time, cooning in the

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remote interior is a famous pastime. As this animal is entirely nocturnal in its habits, it is hunted only at night. A piece of corn on some remote side-hill near the mountain, or between two pieces of woods, is most apt to be frequented by them. While the corn is yet green they pull the ears down like hogs, and, tearing open the sheathing of husks, eat the tender, succulent kernels, bruising and destroying much more than they devour. Sometimes their ravages are a matter of serious concern to the farmer. But every such neighborhood has its coon-dog, and the boys and young men dearly love the sport. The party sets out about eight or nine o'clock of a dark, moonless night, and stealthily approaches the cornfield. The dog knows his business, and when he is put into a patch of corn and told to "hunt them up" he makes a thorough search, and will not be misled by any other scent. You hear him rattling through the corn, hither and yon, with great speed. The coons prick up their ears, and leave on the opposite side of the field. In the stillness you may sometimes hear a single stone rattle on the wall as they hurry toward the woods. If the dog finds nothing, he comes back to his master in a short time, and says in his dumb way, "No coon there." But if he strikes a trail, you presently hear a louder rattling on the stone wall, and then a hurried bark as he enters the woods, followed in a few minutes by loud and repeated barking as he reaches the foot of

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the tree in which the coon has taken refuge. Then follows a pellmell rush of the cooning party up the hill, into the woods, through the brush and the darkness, falling over prostrate trees, pitching into gullies and hollows, losing hats and tearing clothes, till finally, guided by the baying of the faithful dog, the tree is reached. The first thing now in order is to kindle a fire, and, if its light reveals the coon, to shoot him; if not, to fell the tree with an axe. If this happens to be too great a sacrifice of timber and of strength, to sit down at the foot of the tree till morning.

But with March our interest in these phases of animal life, which winter has so emphasized and brought out, begins to decline. Vague rumors are afloat in the air of a great and coming change. We are eager for Winter to be gone, since he, too, is fugitive and cannot keep his place. Invisible hands deface his icy statuary; his chisel has lost its cunning. The drifts, so pure and exquisite, are now earth-stained and weather-worn, — the flutes and scallops, and fine, firm lines, all gone; and what was a grace and an ornament to the hills is now a disfiguration. Like worn and unwashed linen appear the remains of that spotless robe with which he clothed the world as his bride.

But he will not abdicate without a struggle. Day after day he rallies his scattered forces, and night after night pitches his white tents on the hills, and

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would fain regain his lost ground; but the young prince in every encounter prevails. Slowly and reluctantly the gray old hero retreats up the mountain, till finally the south rain comes in earnest, and in a night he is dead.

IV

THE FOX

I HAVE already spoken of the fox at some length, but it will take a chapter by itself to do half justice to his portrait.

He furnishes, perhaps, the only instance that can be cited of a fur-bearing animal that not only holds its own, but that actually increases in the face of the means that are used for its extermination. The beaver, for instance, was gone before the earliest settlers could get a sight of him; and even the mink and marten are now only rarely seen, or not seen at all, in places where they were once abundant.

But the fox has survived civilization, and in some localities is no doubt more abundant now than in the time of the Revolution. For half a century at least he has been almost the only prize, in the way of fur, that was to be found on our mountains, and he has been hunted and trapped and waylaid, sought for as game and pursued in enmity, taken by fair means and by foul, and yet there seems not the slightest danger of the species becoming extinct.

One would think that a single hound in a neigh-

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borhood, filling the mountains with his bayings, and leaving no nook or byway of them unexplored, was enough to drive and scare every fox from the country. But not so. Indeed, I am almost tempted to say, the more hounds, the more foxes.

I recently spent a summer month in a mountainous district in the State of New York, where, from its earliest settlement, the red fox has been the standing prize for skill in the use of the trap and gun. At the house where I was staying were two foxhounds, and a neighbor half a mile distant had a third. There were many others in the township, and in season they were well employed, too; but the three spoken of, attended by their owners, held high carnival on the mountains in the immediate vicinity. And many were the foxes that, winter after winter, fell before them, twenty-five having been shot, the season before my visit, on one small range alone. And yet the foxes were apparently never more abundant than they were that summer, and never bolder, coming at night within a few rods of the house, and of the unchained alert hounds, and making havoc among the poultry.

One morning a large, fat goose was found minus her head and otherwise mangled. Both hounds had disappeared, and, as they did not come back till near night, it was inferred that they had cut short Reynard's repast, and given him a good chase into the bargain. But next night he was back again, and

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this time got safely off with the goose. A couple of nights after he must have come with recruits, for next morning three large goslings were reported missing. The silly geese now got it through their noddles that there was danger about, and every night thereafter came close up to the house to roost.

A brood of turkeys, the old one tied to a tree a few rods to the rear of the house, were the next objects of attack. The predaceous rascal came, as usual, in the latter half of the night. I happened to be awake, and heard the helpless turkey cry "quit," "quit," with great emphasis. Another sleeper, on the floor above me, who, it seems, had been sleeping with one ear awake for several nights in apprehension for the safety of his turkeys, heard the sound also, and instantly divined its cause. I heard the window open and a voice summon the dogs. A loud bellow was the response, which caused Reynard to take himself off in a hurry. A moment more, and the mother turkey would have shared the fate of the geese. There she lay at the end of her tether, with extended wings, bitten and rumped. The young ones, roosting in a row on the fence near by, had taken flight on the first alarm.

Turkeys, retaining many of their wild instincts, are less easily captured by the fox than any other of our domestic fowls. On the slightest show of danger they take to wing, and it is not unusual, in the locality of which I speak, to find them in the morning

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perched in the most unwonted places, as on the peak of the barn or hay-shed, or on the tops of the apple-trees, their tails spread and their manners showing much excitement. Perchance one turkey is minus her tail, the fox having succeeded in getting only a mouthful of quills.

As the brood grows and their wings develop, they wander far from the house in quest of grasshoppers. At such times they are all watchfulness and suspicion. Crossing the fields one day, attended by a dog that much resembled a fox, I came suddenly upon a brood about one third grown, which were feeding in a pasture just beyond a wood. It so happened that they caught sight of the dog without seeing me, when instantly, with the celerity of wild game, they launched into the air, and, while the old one perched upon a treetop, as if to keep an eye on the supposed enemy, the young went sailing over the trees toward home.

The two hounds above referred to, accompanied by a cur-dog, whose business it was to mind the farm, but who took as much delight in running away from prosy duty as if he had been a schoolboy, would frequently steal off and have a good hunt all by themselves, just for the fun of the thing, I suppose. I more than half suspect that it was as a kind of taunt or retaliation, that Reynard came and took the geese from under their very noses. One morning they went off and stayed till the afternoon of the next

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day; they ran the fox all day and all night, the hounds baying at every jump, the cur-dog silent and tenacious. When the trio returned, they came dragging themselves along, stiff, footsore, gaunt, and hungry. For a day or two afterward they lay about the kennels, seeming to dread nothing so much as the having to move. The stolen hunt was their "spree," their "bender," and of course they must take time to get over it.

Some old hunters think the fox enjoys the chase as much as the hound, especially when the latter runs slow, as the best hounds do. The fox will wait for the hound, will sit down and listen, or play about, crossing and recrossing and doubling upon his track, as if enjoying a mischievous consciousness of the perplexity he would presently cause his pursuer. It is evident, however, that the fox does not always have his share of the fun: before a swift dog, or in a deep snow, or on a wet day, when his tail gets heavy, he must put his best foot forward. As a last resort he "holes up." Sometimes he resorts to numerous devices to mislead and escape the dog altogether. He will walk in the bed of a small creek, or on a rail-fence. I heard of an instance of a fox, hard and long pressed, that took to a rail-fence, and, after walking some distance, made a leap to one side to a hollow stump, in the cavity of which he snugly stowed himself. The ruse succeeded, and the dogs lost the trail; but the hunter, coming up, passed by

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chance near the stump, when out bounded the fox, his cunning availing him less than he deserved. On another occasion the fox took to the public road, and stepped with great care and precision into a sleigh-track. The hard, polished snow took no imprint of the light foot, and the scent was no doubt less than it would have been on a rougher surface. Maybe, also, the rogue had considered the chances of another sleigh coming along, before the hound, and obliterating the trail entirely.

Audubon tells us of a certain fox, which, when started by the hounds, always managed to elude them at a certain point. Finally the hunter concealed himself in the locality, to discover, if possible, the trick. Presently along came the fox, and, making a leap to one side, ran up the trunk of a fallen tree which had lodged some feet from the ground, and concealed himself in the top. In a few minutes the hounds came up, and in their eagerness passed some distance beyond the point, and then went still farther, looking for the lost trail. Then the fox hastened down, and, taking his back-track, fooled the dogs completely.

I was told of a silver-gray fox in northern New York, which, when pursued by the hounds, would run till it had hunted up another fox, or the fresh trail of one, when it would so manœuvre that the hound would invariably be switched off on the second track.

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In cold, dry weather the fox will sometimes elude the hound, at least delay him much, by taking to a bare, plowed field. The hard dry earth seems not to retain a particle of the scent, and the hound gives a loud, long, peculiar bark, to signify he has trouble. It is now his turn to show his wit, which he often does by passing completely around the field, and resuming the trail again where it crosses the fence or a strip of snow.

The fact that any dry, hard surface is unfavorable to the hound suggests, in a measure, the explanation of the wonderful faculty that all dogs in a degree possess to track an animal by the scent of the foot alone. Did you ever think why a dog's nose is always wet? Examine the nose of a foxhound, for instance; how very moist and sensitive! Cause this moisture to dry up, and the dog would be as powerless to track an animal as you are! The nose of the cat, you may observe, is but a little moist, and, as you know, her sense of smell is far inferior to that of the dog. Moisten your own nostrils and lips, and this sense is plainly sharpened. The sweat of a dog's nose, therefore, is no doubt a vital element in its power, and, without taking a very long logical stride, we may infer how much a damp, rough surface aids him in tracking game.

A fox hunt in this country is, of course, quite a different thing from what it is in England, where all the squires and noblemen of a borough, superbly

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mounted, go riding over the country, guided by the yelling hounds, till the fox is literally run down and murdered. Here the hunter prefers a rough, mountainous country, and, as probably most persons know, takes advantage of the disposition of the fox, when pursued by the hound, to play or circle around a ridge or bold point, and, taking his stand near the run-way, shoots him down.

I recently had the pleasure of a turn with some experienced hunters. As we ascended the ridge toward the mountain, keeping in our ears the uncertain baying of the hounds as they slowly unraveled an old trail, my companions pointed out to me the different run-ways, — a gap in the fence here, a rock just below the brow of the hill there, that tree yonder near the corner of the woods, or the end of that stone wall looking down the side-hill, or commanding a cow-path, or the outlet of a wood-road. A half-wild apple orchard near a cross-road was pointed out as an invariable run-way, where the fox turned toward the mountain again, after having been driven down the ridge. There appeared to be no reason why the foxes should habitually pass any particular point, yet the hunters told me that year after year they took about the same turns, each generation of foxes running through the upper corner of that field, or crossing the valley near yonder stone wall, when pursued by the dog. It seems the fox when he finds himself followed is perpetually tempted to

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turn in his course, to deflect from a right line, as a person would undoubtedly be under similar circumstances. If he is on this side of the ridge, when he hears the dog break around on his trail he speedily crosses to the other side; if he is in the fields, he takes again to the woods; if in the valley, he hastens to the high land, and evidently enjoys running along the ridge and listening to the dogs, slowly tracing out his course in the fields below. At such times he appears to have but one sense, hearing, and that seems to be reverted toward his pursuers. He is constantly pausing, looking back and listening, and will almost run over the hunter if he stands still, even though not at all concealed.

Animals of this class depend far less upon their sight than upon their hearing and sense of smell. Neither the fox nor the dog is capable of much discrimination with the eye; they seem to see things only in the mass; but with the nose they can analyze and define, and get at the most subtle shades of difference. The fox will not read a man from a stump or a rock, unless he gets his scent, and the dog does not know his master in a crowd until he has smelled him.

On the occasion to which I refer, it was not many minutes after the dogs entered the woods on the side of the mountain before they gave out sharp and eager, and we knew at once that the fox was started. We were then near a point that had been

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designated as a sure run-way, and hastened to get into position with all speed. For my part I was so taken with the music of the hounds, as it swelled up over the ridge, that I quite forgot the game. I saw one of my companions leveling his gun, and, looking a few rods to the right, saw the fox coming right on to us. I had barely time to note the silly and abashed expression that came over him as he saw us in his path, when he was cut down as by a flash of lightning. The rogue did not appear frightened, but ashamed and out of countenance, as one does when some trick has been played upon him, or when detected in some mischief.

Late in the afternoon, as we were passing through a piece of woods in the valley below, another fox, the third that day, broke from his cover in an old treetop, under our very noses, and drew the fire of three of our party, myself among the number, but, thanks to the interposing trees and limbs, escaped unhurt. Then the dogs took up the trail and there was lively music again. The fox steered through the fields direct for the ridge where we had passed up in the morning. We knew he would take a turn here and then point for the mountain, and two of us, with the hope of cutting him off by the old orchard, through which we were again assured he would surely pass, made a precipitous rush for that point. It was nearly half a mile distant, most of the way up a steep side-hill, and if the fox took

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the circuit indicated he would probably be there in twelve or fifteen minutes. Running up an angle of 45° seems quite easy work for a four-footed beast like a dog or a fox, but for a two-legged animal like a man it is very heavy and awkward. Before I got halfway up there seemed to be a vacuum all about me, so labored was my breathing, and when I reached the summit my head swam and my knees were about giving out; but pressing on, I had barely time to reach a point in the road abreast of the orchard, when I heard the hounds, and, looking under the trees, saw the fox, leaping high above the weeds and grass, coming straight toward me. He evidently had not got over the first scare, which our haphazard fusillade had given him, and was making unusually quick time. I was armed with a rifle, and said to myself that now was the time to win the laurels I had coveted. For half a day previous I had been practicing on a pumpkin which a patient youth had rolled down a hill for me, and had improved my shot considerably. Now a yellow pumpkin was coming which was not a pumpkin, and for the first time during the day opportunity favored me. I expected the fox to cross the road a few yards below me, but just then I heard him whisk through the grass, and he bounded upon the fence a few yards above. He seemed to cringe as he saw his old enemy, and to depress his fur to half his former dimensions. Three bounds and he had

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cleared the road, when my bullet tore up the sod beside him, but to this hour I do not know whether I looked at the fox without seeing my gun, or whether I did sight him across its barrel. I only know that I did not distinguish myself in the use of the rifle on that occasion, and went home to wreak my revenge upon another pumpkin; but without much improvement of my skill, for, a few days after, another fox ran under my very nose with perfect impunity. There is something so fascinating in the sudden appearance of the fox that the eye is quite mastered, and, unless the instinct of the sportsman is very strong and quick, the prey will slip through his grasp.

A still hunt rarely brings you in sight of a fox, as his ears are much sharper than yours, and his tread much lighter. But if the fox is mousing in the fields, and you discover him before he does you, you may, the wind favoring, call him within a few paces of you. Secrete yourself behind the fence, or some other object, and squeak as nearly like a mouse as possible. Reynard will hear the sound at an incredible distance. Pricking up his ears, he gets the direction, and comes trotting along as unsuspiciously as can be. I have never had an opportunity to try the experiment, but I know perfectly reliable persons who have. One man, in the pasture getting his cows, called a fox which was too busy mousing to get the first sight, till it jumped

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upon the wall just over where he sat secreted. Giving a loud whoop and jumping up at the same time, the fox came as near being frightened out of his skin as I suspect a fox ever was.

In trapping for a fox, you get perhaps about as much "fun" and as little fur as in any trapping amusement you can engage in. The one feeling that ever seems present to the mind of Reynard is suspicion. He does not need experience to teach him, but seems to know from the jump that there is such a thing as a trap, and that a trap has a way of grasping a fox's paw that is more frank than friendly. Cornered in a hole or a den, a trap can be set so that the poor creature has the desperate alternative of being caught or starving. He is generally caught, though not till he has braved hunger for a good many days.

But to know all his cunning and shrewdness, bait him in the field, or set your trap by some carcass where he is wont to come. In some cases he will uncover the trap, and leave the marks of his contempt for it in a way you cannot mistake, or else he will not approach within a rod of it. Occasionally, however, he finds in a trapper more than his match, and is fairly caught. When this happens, the trap, which must be of the finest make, is never touched with the bare hand, but, after being thoroughly smoked and greased, is set in a bed of dry ashes or chaff in a remote field, where the fox has

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been emboldened to dig for several successive nights for morsels of toasted cheese.

A light fall of snow aids the trapper's art and conspires to Reynard's ruin. But how lightly he is caught, when caught at all! barely the end of his toes, or at most a spike through the middle of his foot. I once saw a large painting of a fox struggling with a trap which held him by the hind leg, above the gambrel-joint! A painting alongside of it represented a peasant driving an ox-team from the off-side! A fox would be as likely to be caught above the gambrel-joint as a farmer would to drive his team from the off-side. I knew one that was caught by the tip of the lower jaw. He came nightly, and took the morsel of cheese from the pan of the trap without springing it. A piece was then secured to the pan by a thread, with the result as above stated.

I have never been able to see clearly why the mother fox generally selects a burrow or hole in the open field in which to have her young, except it be, as some hunters maintain, for better security. The young foxes are wont to come out on a warm day, and play like puppies in front of the den. The view being unobstructed on all sides by trees or bushes, in the cover of which danger might approach, they are less liable to surprise and capture. On the slightest sound they disappear in the hole. Those who have watched the gambols of young foxes speak of

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them as very amusing, even more arch and playful than those of kittens, while a spirit profoundly wise and cunning seems to look out of their young eyes. The parent fox can never be caught in the den with them, but is hovering near the woods, which are always at hand, and by her warning cry or bark tells them when to be on their guard. She usually has at least three dens, at no great distance apart, and moves stealthily in the night with her charge from one to the other, so as to mislead her enemies. Many a party of boys, and of men, too, discovering the whereabouts of a litter, have gone with shovels and picks, and, after digging away vigorously for several hours, have found only an empty hole for their pains. The old fox, finding her secret had been found out, had waited for darkness, in the cover of which to transfer her household to new quarters; or else some old fox-hunter, jealous of the preservation of his game, and getting word of the intended destruction of the litter, had gone at dusk the night before, and made some disturbance about the den, perhaps flashed some powder in its mouth, — a hint which the shrewd animal knew how to interpret.

The more scientific aspects of the question may not be without interest to some of my readers. The fox belongs to the great order of flesh-eating animals called *Carnivora*, and of the family called *Canidæ*, or dogs. The wolf is a kind of wild dog,

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and the fox is a kind of wolf. Foxes, unlike wolves, however, never go in packs or companies, but hunt singly. The fox has a kind of bark which suggests the dog, as have all the members of this family. The kinship is further shown by the fact that during certain periods, for the most part in the summer, the dog cannot be made to attack or even to pursue the female fox, but will run from her in the most shamefaced manner, which he will not do in the case of any other animal except a wolf. Many of the ways and manners of the fox, when tamed, are also like the dog's. I once saw a young red fox exposed for sale in the market in Washington. A colored man had him, and said he had caught him out in Virginia. He led him by a small chain, as he would a puppy, and the innocent young rascal would lie on his side and bask and sleep in the sunshine, amid all the noise and chaffering around him, precisely like a dog. He was about the size of a full-grown cat, and there was a bewitching beauty about him that I could hardly resist. On another occasion, I saw a gray fox, about two thirds grown, playing with a dog of about the same size, and by nothing in the manners of either could you tell which was the dog and which the fox.

Some naturalists think there are but two permanent species of the fox in the United States, namely, the gray fox and the red fox, though there are five or six varieties. The gray fox, which is much

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smaller and less valuable than the red, is the Southern species, and is said to be rarely found north of Maryland, though in certain rocky localities along the Hudson it is common.

In the Southern States this fox is often hunted in the English fashion, namely, on horseback, the riders tearing through the country in pursuit till the animal is run down and caught. This is the only fox that will tree. When too closely pressed, instead of taking to a den or a hole, it climbs beyond the reach of the dogs in some small tree.

The red fox is the Northern species, and is rarely found farther south than the mountainous districts of Virginia. In the Arctic regions it gives place to the Arctic fox, which most of the season is white.

The prairie fox, the cross fox, and the black or silver-gray fox seem only varieties of the red fox, as the black squirrel breeds from the gray, and the black woodchuck is found with the brown. There is little to distinguish them from the red, except the color, though the prairie fox is said to be the larger of the two.

The cross fox is dark brown on its muzzle and extremities, with a cross of red and black on its shoulders and breast, which peculiarity of coloring, and not any trait in its character, gives it its name. It is very rare, and few hunters have ever seen one. The American Fur Company used to obtain annually from fifty to one hundred skins. The

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skins formerly sold for twenty-five dollars, though I believe they now bring only about five dollars.

The black or silver-gray fox is the rarest of all, and its skin the most valuable. The Indians used to estimate it equal to forty beaver skins. The great fur companies seldom collect in a single season more than four or five skins at any one post. Most of those of the American Fur Company come from the head-waters of the Mississippi. One of the younger Audubons shot one in northern New York. The fox had been seen and fired at many times by the hunters of the neighborhood, and had come to have the reputation of leading a charmed life, and of being invulnerable to anything but a silver bullet. But Audubon brought her down (for it was a female) on the second trial. She had a litter of young in the vicinity, which he also dug out, and found the nest to hold three black and four red ones, which fact settled the question with him that black and red often have the same parentage, and are in truth the same species.

The color of this fox, in a point-blank view, is black, but viewed at an angle it is a dark silver-gray, whence has arisen the notion that the black and the silver-gray are distinct varieties. The tip of the tail is always white.

In almost every neighborhood there are traditions of this fox, and it is the dream of young sportsmen; but I have yet to meet the person who has

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seen one. I should go well to the north, into the British Possessions, if I were bent on obtaining a specimen.

One more item from the books. From the fact that in the bone caves in this country skulls of the gray fox are found, but none of the red, it is inferred by some naturalists that the red fox is a descendant from the European species, which it resembles in form but surpasses in beauty, and its appearance on this continent is of comparatively recent date.

V

A MARCH CHRONICLE

ON THE POTOMAC

MARCH 1. — The first day of spring and the first spring day! I felt the change the moment I put my head out of doors in the morning. A fitful, gusty south wind was blowing, though the sky was clear. But the sunlight was not the same. There was an interfusion of a new element. Not ten days before there had been a day just as bright, — even brighter and warmer, — a clear, crystalline day of February, with nothing vernal in it; but this day was opaline; there was a film, a sentiment in it, a nearer approach to life. Then there was that fresh, indescribable odor, a breath from the Gulf, or from Florida and the Carolinas, — a subtle, persuasive influence that thrilled the sense. Every root and rootlet under ground must have felt it; the buds of the soft maple and silver poplar felt it, and swelled perceptibly during the day. The robins knew it, and were here that morning; so were the crow blackbirds. The shad must have known it, down deep in their marine retreats, and leaped and sported about the mouths of the rivers.

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ready to dart up them if the genial influence continued. The bees in the hive also, or in the old tree in the woods, no doubt awoke to new life; and the hibernating animals, the bears and woodchucks, rolled up in their subterranean dens, — I imagine the warmth reached even them, and quickened their sluggish circulation.

Then in the afternoon there was the smell of smoke, — the first spring fires in the open air. The Virginia farmer is raking together the rubbish in his garden, or in the field he is preparing for the plow, and burning it up. In imagination I am there to help him. I see the children playing about, delighted with the sport and the resumption of work; the smoke goes up through the shining haze; the farmhouse door stands open, and lets in the afternoon sun; the cow lows for her calf, or hides it in the woods; and in the morning the geese, sporting in the spring sun, answer the call of the wild flock steering northward above them.

As I stroll through the market I see the signs here. That old colored woman has brought spring in her basket in those great green flakes of moss, with arbutus showing the pink; and her old man is just in good time with his fruit trees and gooseberry bushes. Various bulbs and roots are also being brought out and offered, and the onions are sprouting on the stands. I see bunches of robins and cedar-birds also, — so much melody and beauty

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cut off from the supply going north. The fish-market is beginning to be bright with perch and bass, and with shad from the Southern rivers, and wild ducks are taking the place of prairie hens and quails.

In the Carolinas, no doubt, the fruit trees are in bloom, and the rice land is being prepared for the seed. In the mountains of Virginia and in Ohio they are making maple sugar; in Kentucky and Tennessee they are sowing oats; in Illinois they are, perchance, husking the corn which has remained on the stalk in the field all winter. Wild geese and ducks are streaming across the sky from the lower Mississippi toward the great lakes, pausing awhile on the prairies, or alighting in the great cornfields, making the air resound with the noise of their wings upon the stalks and dry shucks as they resume their journey. About this time, or a little later, in the still spring morning, the prairie hens or prairie cocks set up that low, musical cooing or crowing that defies the ear to trace or locate. The air is filled with that soft, mysterious undertone; and, save that a bird is seen here and there flitting low over the ground, the sportsman walks for hours without coming any nearer the source of the elusive sound.

All over a certain belt of the country the rivers and streams are roily, and chafe their banks. There is a movement of the soils. The capacity of the water to take up and hold in solution the salt and

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earths seemed never so great before. The frost has relinquished its hold, and turned everything over to the water. Mud is the mother now; and out of it creep the frogs, the turtles, the crawfish.

In the North how goes the season? The winter is perchance just breaking up. The old frost king is just striking, or preparing to strike, his tents. The ice is going out of the rivers, and the first steamboat on the Hudson is picking its way through the blue lanes and channels. The white gulls are making excursions up from the bay, to see what the prospects are. In the lumber countries, along the upper Kennebec and Penobscot, and along the northern Hudson, starters are at work with their pikes and hooks starting out the pine logs on the first spring freshet. All winter, through the deep snows, they have been hauling them to the bank of the stream, or placing them where the tide would reach them. Now, in countless numbers, beaten and bruised, the trunks of the noble trees come, borne by the angry flood. The snow that furnishes the smooth bed over which they were drawn, now melted, furnishes the power that carries them down to the mills. On the Delaware the raftsmen are at work running out their rafts. Floating islands of logs and lumber go down the swollen stream, bending over the dams, shooting through the rapids, and bringing up at last in Philadelphia or beyond.

In the inland farming districts what are the signs?

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Few and faint, but very suggestive. The sun has power to melt the snow; and in the meadows all the knolls are bare, and the sheep are gnawing them industriously. The drifts on the side-hills also begin to have a worn and dirty look, and, where they cross the highway, to become soft, letting the teams in up to their bellies. The oxen labor and grunt, or patiently wait for the shovel to release them; but the spirited horse leaps and flounders, and is determined not to give up. In the woods the snow is melted around the trees, and the burrs and pieces of bark have absorbed the heat till they have sunk halfway through to the ground. The snow is melting on the under side; the frost is going out of the ground: now comes the trial of your foundations.

About the farm buildings there awakens the old familiar chorus, the bleating of calves and lambs, and the answering bass of their distressed mothers; while the hens are cackling in the hay-loft, and the geese are noisy in the spring run. But the most delightful of all farm work, or of all rural occupations, is at hand, namely, sugar-making. In New York and northern New England the beginning of this season varies from the first to the middle of March, sometimes even holding off till April. The moment the contest between the sun and frost fairly begins, sugar weather begins; and the more even the contest, the more the sweet. I do not know

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what the philosophy of it is, but it seems a kind of see-saw, as if the sun drew the sap up and the frost drew it down; and an excess of either stops the flow. Before the sun has got power to unlock the frost, there is no sap; and after the frost has lost its power to lock up again the work of the sun, there is no sap. But when it freezes soundly at night, with a bright, warm sun next day, wind in the west, and no signs of a storm, the veins of the maples fairly thrill. Pierce the bark anywhere, and out gushes the clear, sweet liquid. But let the wind change to the south and blow moist and warm, destroying that crispness of the air, and the flow slackens at once, unless there be a deep snow in the woods to counteract or neutralize the warmth, in which case the run may continue till the rain sets in. The rough-coated old trees, — one would not think they could scent a change so quickly through that wrapper of dead, dry bark an inch or more thick. I have to wait till I put my head out of doors, and feel the air on my bare cheek, and sniff it with my nose; but their nerves of taste and smell are no doubt under ground, imbedded in the moisture, and if there is anything that responds quickly to atmospheric changes, it is water. Do not the fish, think you, down deep in the streams, feel every wind that blows, whether it be hot or cold? Do not the frogs and newts and turtles under the mud feel the warmth, though the water still seems like ice? As the springs begin to rise in ad-

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vance of the rain, so the intelligence of every change seems to travel ahead under ground and forewarn things.

A "sap-run" seldom lasts more than two or three days. By that time there is a change in the weather, perhaps a rainstorm, which takes the frost nearly all out of the ground. Then, before there can be another run, the trees must be wound up again, the storm must have a white tail, and "come off" cold. Presently the sun rises clear again, and cuts the snow or softens the hard-frozen ground with his beams, and the trees take a fresh start. The boys go through the wood, emptying out the buckets or the pans, and reclaiming those that have blown away, and the delightful work is resumed. But the first run, like first love, is always the best, always the fullest, always the sweetest; while there is a purity and delicacy of flavor about the sugar that far surpasses any subsequent yield.

Trees differ much in the quantity as well as in the quality of sap produced in a given season. Indeed, in a bush or orchard of fifty or one hundred trees, as wide a difference may be observed in this respect as among that number of cows in regard to the milk they yield. I have in my mind now a "sugar-bush" nestled in the lap of a spur of the Catskills, every tree of which is known to me, and assumes a distinct individuality in my thought. I know the look and quality of the whole two hun-

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dred; and when on my annual visit to the old homestead I find one has perished, or fallen before the axe, I feel a personal loss. They are all veterans, and have yielded up their life's blood for the profit of two or three generations. They stand in little groups for couples. One stands at the head of a spring-run, and lifts a large dry branch high above the woods, where hawks and crows love to alight. Half a dozen are climbing a little hill; while others stand far out in the field, as if they had come out to get the sun. A file of five or six worthies sentry the woods on the northwest, and confront a steep side-hill where sheep and cattle graze. An equal number crowd up to the line on the east; and their gray, stately trunks are seen across meadows or fields of grain. Then there is a pair of Siamese twins, with heavy, bushy tops; while in the forks of a wood-road stand the two brothers, with their arms around each other's neck, and their bodies in gentle contact for a distance of thirty feet.

One immense maple, known as the "old-cream-pan-tree," stands, or did stand, quite alone among a thick growth of birches and beeches. But it kept its end up, and did the work of two or three ordinary trees, as its name denotes. Next to it, the best milcher in the lot was a shaggy-barked tree in the edge of the field, that must have been badly crushed or broken when it was little, for it had an ugly crook near the ground, and seemed to struggle all the way

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up to get in an upright attitude, but never quite succeeded; yet it could outrun all its neighbors nevertheless. The poorest tree in the lot was a short-bodied, heavy-topped tree that stood in the edge of a spring-run. It seldom produced half a gallon of sap during the whole season; but this half gallon was very sweet, — three or four times as sweet as the ordinary article. In the production of sap, top seems far less important than body. It is not length of limb that wins in this race, but length of trunk. A heavy, bushy-topped tree in the open field, for instance, will not, according to my observation, compare with a tall, long-trunked tree in the woods, that has but a small top. Young, thrifty, thin-skinned trees start up with great spirit, indeed, fairly on a run; but they do not hold out, and their blood is very diluted. Cattle are very fond of sap; so are sheep, and will drink enough to kill them. The honey-bees get here their first sweet, and the earliest bug takes up his permanent abode on the “spile.” The squirrels also come timidly down the trees, and sip the sweet flow; and occasionally an ugly lizard, just out of its winter quarters and in quest of novelties, creeps up into the pan or bucket. Soft maple makes a very fine white sugar, superior in quality, but far less in quantity.

I think any person who has tried it will agree with me about the charm of sugar-making, though he have no tooth for the sweet itself. It is enough

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that it is the first spring work, and takes one to the woods. The robins are just arriving, and their merry calls ring through the glades. The squirrels are now venturing out, and the woodpeckers and nuthatches run briskly up the trees. The crow begins to caw, with his accustomed heartiness and assurance; and one sees the white rump and golden shafts of the high-hole as he flits about the open woods. Next week, or the week after, it may be time to begin plowing, and other sober work about the farm; but this week we will picnic among the maples, and our camp-fire shall be an incense to spring. Ah, I am there now! I see the woods flooded with sunlight; I smell the dry leaves, and the mould under them just quickened by the warmth; the long-trunked maples in their gray, rough liveries stand thickly about; I see the brimming pans and buckets, always on the sunny side of the trees, and hear the musical dropping of the sap; the "boiling-place," with its delightful camp features, is just beyond the first line, with its great arch looking to the southwest. The sound of its axe rings through the woods. Its huge kettles or broad pans boil and foam; and I ask no other delight than to watch and tend them all day, to dip the sap from the great casks into them, and to replenish the fire with the newly-cut birch and beech wood. A slight breeze is blowing from the west; I catch the glint here and there in the afternoon sun of the little rills and

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creeks coursing down the sides of the hills; the awakening sounds about the farm and the woods reach my ear; and every rustle or movement of the air or on the earth seems like a pulse of returning life in nature. I sympathize with that verdant Hibernian who liked sugar-making so well that he thought he should follow it the whole year. I should at least be tempted to follow the season up the mountains, camping this week on one terrace, next week on one farther up, keeping just on the hem of Winter's garment, and just in advance of the swelling buds, until my smoke went up through the last growth of maple that surrounds the summit.

Maple sugar is peculiarly an American product, the discovery of it dating back into the early history of New England. The first settlers usually caught the sap in rude troughs, and boiled it down in kettles slung to a pole by a chain, the fire being built around them. The first step in the way of improvement was to use tin pans instead of troughs, and a large stone arch in which the kettles or caldrons were set with the fire beneath them. But of late years, as the question of fuel has become a more important one, greater improvements have been made. The arch has given place to an immense stove designed for that special purpose; and the kettles to broad, shallow, sheet-iron pans, the object being to economize all the heat, and to obtain the greatest possible extent of evaporating surface.

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March 15. — From the first to the middle of March the season made steady progress. There were no checks, no drawbacks. Warm, copious rains from the south and southwest, followed by days of unbroken sunshine. In the moist places — and what places are not moist at this season? — the sod buzzed like a hive. The absorption and filtration among the network of roots was an audible process.

The cld fairly sang. How the trees responded also! The silver poplars were masses of soft gray bloom, and the willows down toward the river seemed to have slipped off their old bark and on their new in a single night. The soft maples, too, when massed in the distance, their tops deeply dyed in a bright maroon color, — how fair they looked!

The 15th of the month was “one of those charmed days when the genius of God doth flow.” The wind died away by mid-forenoon, and the day settled down so softly and lovingly upon the earth, touching everything, filling everything. The sky visibly came down. You could see it among the trees and between the hills. The sun poured himself into the earth as into a cup, and the atmosphere fairly swam with warmth and light. In the afternoon I walked out over the country roads north of the city. Innumerable columns of smoke were going up all around the horizon from burning brush and weeds, fields being purified by fire. The farmers were hauling out manure; and I am free to confess, the odor of it.

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with its associations of the farm and the stable, of cattle and horses, was good in my nostrils. In the woods the liverleaf and arbutus had just opened doubtfully ; and in the little pools great masses of frogs' spawn, with a milky tinge, were deposited. The youth who accompanied me brought some of it home in his handkerchief, to see it hatch in a goblet.

The month came in like a lamb, and went out like a lamb, setting at naught the old adage. The white fleecy clouds lay here and there, as if at rest, on the blue sky. The fields were a perfect emerald ; and the lawns, with the new gold of the first dandelions sprinkled about, were lush with grass. In the parks and groves there was a faint mist of foliage, except among the willows, where there was not only a mist, but a perfect fountain-fall of green. In the distance the river looked blue ; the spring freshets at last over, the ground settled, the jocund season steps forth into April with a bright and confident look.

VI

AUTUMN TIDES

THE season is always a little behind the sun in our climate, just as the tide is always a little behind the moon. According to the calendar, the summer ought to culminate about the 21st of June, but in reality it is some weeks later; June is a maiden month all through. It is not high noon in nature till about the first or second week in July. When the chestnut-tree blooms, the meridian of the year is reached. By the first of August it is fairly one o'clock. The lustre of the season begins to dim, the foliage of the trees and woods to tarnish, the plumage of the birds to fade, and their songs to cease. The hints of approaching fall are on every hand. How suggestive this thistle-down, for instance, which, as I sit by the open window, comes in and brushes softly across my hand! The first snowflake tells of winter not more plainly than this driving down heralds the approach of fall. Come here, my fairy, and tell me whence you come and whither you go? What brings you to port here, you gossamer ship sailing the great sea? How exquisitely frail and delicate! One of the lightest

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things in nature ; so light that in the closed room here it will hardly rest in my open palm. A feather is a clod beside it. Only a spider's web will hold it; coarser objects have no power over it. Caught in the upper currents of the air and rising above the clouds, it might sail perpetually. Indeed, one fancies it might almost traverse the interstellar ether and drive against the stars. And every thistle-head by the roadside holds hundreds of these sky rovers, — imprisoned Ariels unable to set themselves free. Their liberation may be by the shock of the wind, or the rude contact of cattle, but it is oftener the work of the goldfinch with its complaining brood. The seed of the thistle is the proper food of this bird, and in obtaining it myriads of these winged creatures are scattered to the breeze. Each one is fraught with a seed which it exists to sow, but its wild careering and soaring does not fairly begin till its burden is dropped, and its spherul form is complete. The seeds of many plants and trees are disseminated through the agency of birds ; but the thistle furnishes its own birds, — flocks of them, with wings more ethereal and tireless than were ever given to mortal creature. From the pains Nature thus takes to sow the thistle broadcast over the land, it might be expected to be one of the most troublesome and abundant of weeds. But such is not the case ; the more pernicious and baffling weeds, like snapdragon or blind nettles, are more

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local and restricted in their habits, and unable to fly at all.

In the fall, the battles of the spring are fought over again, beginning at the other or little end of the series. There is the same advance and retreat, with many feints and alarms, between the contending forces, that was witnessed in April and May. The spring comes like a tide running against a strong wind; it is ever beaten back, but ever gaining ground, with now and then a mad "push upon the land" as if to overcome its antagonist at one blow. The cold from the north encroaches upon us in about the same fashion. In September or early in October it usually makes a big stride forward and blackens all the more delicate plants, and hastens the "mortal ripening" of the foliage of the trees, but it is presently beaten back again, and the genial warmth repossesses the land. Before long, however, the cold returns to the charge with augmented forces and gains much ground.

The course of the seasons never does run smooth, owing to the unequal distribution of land and water, mountain, wood, and plain.

An equilibrium, however, is usually reached in our climate in October, sometimes the most marked in November, forming the delicious Indian summer; a truce is declared, and both forces, heat and cold, meet and mingle in friendly converse on the field. In the earlier season, this poise of the temperature,

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this slack-water in nature, comes in May and June; but the October calm is most marked. Day after day, and sometimes week after week, you cannot tell which way the current is setting. Indeed, there is no current, but the season seems to drift a little this way or a little that, just as the breeze happens to freshen a little in one quarter or the other. The fall of '74 was the most remarkable in this respect I remember ever to have seen. The equilibrium of the season lasted from the middle of October till near December, with scarcely a break. There were six weeks of Indian summer, all gold by day, and, when the moon came, all silver by night. The river was so smooth at times as to be almost invisible, and in its place was the indefinite continuation of the opposite shore down toward the nether world. One seemed to be in an enchanted land, and to breathe all day the atmosphere of fable and romance. Not a smoke, but a kind of shining nimbus filled all the spaces. The vessels would drift by as if in mid-air with all their sails set. The gypsy blood in one, as Lowell calls it, could hardly stay between four walls and see such days go by. Living in tents, in groves and on the hills, seemed the only natural life.

Late in December we had glimpses of the same weather, — the earth had not yet passed all the golden isles. On the 27th of that month, I find I made this entry in my note-book: "A soft, hazy

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day, the year asleep and dreaming of the Indian summer again. Not a breath of air and not a ripple on the river. The sunshine is hot as it falls across my table."

But what a terrible winter followed! what a savage chief the fair Indian maiden gave birth to!

This halcyon period of our autumn will always in some way be associated with the Indian. It is red and yellow and dusky like him. The smoke of his camp-fire seems again in the air. The memory of him pervades the woods. His plumes and mocassins and blanket of skins form just the costume the season demands. It was doubtless his chosen period. The gods smiled upon him then if ever. The time of the chase, the season of the buck and the doe, and of the ripening of all forest fruits; the time when all men are incipient hunters, when the first frosts have given pungency to the air, when to be abroad on the hills or in the woods is a delight that both old and young feel, — if the red aborigine ever had his summer of fullness and contentment, it must have been at this season, and it fitly bears his name.

In how many respects fall imitates or parodies the spring! It is indeed, in some of its features, a sort of second youth of the year. Things emerge and become conspicuous again. The trees attract all eyes as in May. The birds come forth from their summer privacy and parody their spring reunions and rivalries; some of them sing a little after

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a silence of months. The robins, bluebirds, meadow-larks, sparrows, crows, all sport, and call, and behave in a manner suggestive of spring. The cock grouse drums in the woods as he did in April and May. The pigeons reappear, and the wild geese and ducks. The witch-hazel blooms. The trout spawns. The streams are again full. The air is humid, and the moisture rises in the ground. Nature is breaking camp, as in spring she was going into camp. The spring yearning and restlessness is represented in one by the increased desire to travel.

Spring is the inspiration, fall the expiration. Both seasons have their equinoxes, both their filmy, hazy air, their ruddy forest tints, their cold rains, their drenching fogs, their mystic moons; both have the same solar light and warmth, the same rays of the sun; yet, after all, how different the feelings which they inspire! One is the morning, the other the evening; one is youth, the other is age.

The difference is not merely in us; there is a subtle difference in the air, and in the influences that emanate upon us from the dumb forms of nature. All the senses report a difference. The sun seems to have burned out. One recalls the notion of Herodotus that he is grown feeble, and retreats to the south because he can no longer face the cold and the storms from the north. There is a growing potency about his beams in spring, a wan-

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ing splendor about them in fall. One is the kindling fire, the other the subsiding flame.

It is rarely that an artist succeeds in painting unmistakably the difference between sunrise and sunset; and it is equally a trial of his skill to put upon canvas the difference between early spring and late fall, say between April and November. It was long ago observed that the shadows are more opaque in the morning than in the evening; the struggle between the light and the darkness more marked, the gloom more solid, the contrasts more sharp. The rays of the morning sun chisel out and cut down the shadows in a way those of the setting sun do not. Then the sunlight is whiter and newer in the morning, — not so yellow and diffused. A difference akin to this is true of the two seasons I am speaking of. The spring is the morning sunlight, clear and determined; the autumn, the afternoon rays, pensive, lessening, golden.

Does not the human frame yield to and sympathize with the seasons? Are there not more births in the spring and more deaths in the fall? In the spring one vegetates; his thoughts turn to sap; another kind of activity seizes him; he makes new wood which does not harden till past midsummer. For my part, I find all literary work irksome from April to August; my sympathies run in other channels; the grass grows where meditation walked. As fall approaches, the currents mount to the head

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again. But my thoughts do not ripen well till after there has been a frost. The burrs will not open much before that. A man's thinking, I take it, is a kind of combustion, as is the ripening of fruits and leaves, and he wants plenty of oxygen in the air.

Then the earth seems to have become a positive magnet in the fall; the forge and anvil of the sun have had their effect. In the spring it is negative to all intellectual conditions, and drains one of his lightning.

To-day, October 21, I found the air in the bushy fields and lanes under the woods loaded with the perfume of the witch-hazel, — a sweetish, sickening odor. With the blooming of this bush, Nature says, "Positively the last." It is a kind of birth in death, of spring in fall, that impresses one as a little uncanny. All trees and shrubs form their flower-buds in the fall, and keep the secret till spring. How comes the witch-hazel to be the one exception, and to celebrate its floral nuptials on the funeral day of its foliage? No doubt it will be found that the spirit of some lovelorn squaw has passed into this bush, and that this is why it blooms in the Indian summer rather than in the white man's spring.

But it makes the floral series of the woods complete. Between it and the shad-blow of earliest spring lies the mountain of bloom; the latter at the

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base on one side, this at the base on the other, with the chestnut blossoms at the top in midsummer.

A peculiar feature of our fall may sometimes be seen of a clear afternoon late in the season. Looking athwart the fields under the sinking sun, the ground appears covered with a shining veil of gossamer. A fairy net, invisible at midday and which the position of the sun now reveals, rests upon the stubble and upon the spears of grass, covering acres in extent, — the work of innumerable little spiders. The cattle walk through it, but do not seem to break it. Perhaps a fly would make his mark upon it. At the same time, stretching from the tops of the trees, or from the top of a stake in the fence, and leading off toward the sky, may be seen the cables of the flying spider, — a fairy bridge from the visible to the invisible. Occasionally seen against a deep mass of shadow, and perhaps enlarged by clinging particles of dust, they show quite plainly and sag down like a stretched rope, or sway and undulate like a hawser in the tide.

They recall a verse of our rugged poet, Walt Whitman: —

“ A noiseless patient spider,
I mark'd where, in a little promontory, it stood isolated:
Mark'd how, to explore the vacant, vast surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament out of itself;
Ever unreeling them — ever tireless spreading them.

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“ And you, O my soul, where you stand,
Surrounded, surrounded, in measureless oceans of
space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing,—
Seeking the spheres to connect them;
Till the bridge you will need be formed — till the ductile
anchor hold;
Till the gossamer thread you fling, catch somewhere, O
my soul.”

To return a little, September may be described as the month of tall weeds. Where they have been suffered to stand, along fences, by roadsides, and in forgotten corners, — redroot, pigweed, ragweed, vervain, goldenrod, burdock, elecampane, thistles, teasels, nettles, asters, etc., — how they lift themselves up as if not afraid to be seen now! They are all outlaws; every man's hand is against them; yet how surely they hold their own! They love the roadside, because here they are comparatively safe; and ragged and dusty, like the common tramps that they are, they form one of the characteristic features of early fall.

I have often noticed in what haste certain weeds are at times to produce their seeds. Redroot will grow three or four feet high when it has the whole season before it; but let it get a late start, let it come up in August, and it scarcely gets above the ground before it heads out, and apparently goes to work with all its might and main to mature its

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seed. In the growth of most plants or weeds, April and May represent their root, June and July their stalk, and August and September their flower and seed. Hence, when the stalk months are stricken out, as in the present case, there is only time for a shallow root and a foreshortened head. I think most weeds that get a late start show this curtailment of stalk, and this solicitude to reproduce themselves. But I have not observed that any of the cereals are so worldly wise. They have not had to think and to shift for themselves as the weeds have. It does indeed look like a kind of forethought in the redroot. It is killed by the first frost, and hence knows the danger of delay.

How rich in color, before the big show of the tree foliage has commenced, our roadsides are in places in early autumn, — rich to the eye that goes hurriedly by and does not look too closely, — with the profusion of goldenrod and blue and purple asters dashed in upon here and there with the crimson leaves of the dwarf sumac; and at intervals, rising out of the fence corner or crowning a ledge of rocks, the dark green of the cedar with the still fire of the woodbine at its heart. I wonder if the waysides of other lands present any analogous spectacles at this season.

Then, when the maples have burst out into color, showing like great bonfires along the hills, there is indeed a feast for the eye. A maple before your

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windows in October, when the sun shines upon it, will make up for a good deal of the light it has excluded; it fills the room with a soft golden glow.

Thoreau, I believe, was the first to remark upon the individuality of trees of the same species with respect to their foliage, — some maples ripening their leaves early and some late, and some being of one tint and some of another; and, moreover, that each tree held to the same characteristics, year after year. There is, indeed, as great a variety among the maples as among the trees of an apple orchard; some are harvest apples, some are fall apples, and some are winter apples, each with a tint of its own. Those late ripeners are the winter varieties, — the Rhode Island greenings or swaars of their kind. The red maple is the early astrachan. Then come the red-streak, the yellow-sweet, and others. There are windfalls among them, too, as among the apples, and one side or hemisphere of the leaf is usually brighter than the other.

The ash has been less noticed for its autumnal foliage than it deserves. The richest shades of plum-color to be seen — becoming by and by, or in certain lights, a deep maroon — are afforded by this tree. Then at a distance there seems to be a sort of bloom on it, as upon the grape or plum. Amid a grove of yellow maple, it makes a most pleasing contrast.

By mid-October, most of the Rip Van Winkles

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among our brute creatures have lain down for their winter nap. The toads and turtles have buried themselves in the earth. The woodchuck is in his hibernaculum, the skunk in his, the mole in his; and the black bear has his selected, and will go in when the snow comes. He does not like the looks of his big tracks in the snow. They publish his goings and comings too plainly. The coon retires about the same time. The provident wood-mice and the chipmunk are laying by a winter supply of nuts or grain, the former usually in decayed trees, the latter in the ground. I have observed that any unusual disturbance in the woods, near where the chipmunk has his den, will cause him to shift his quarters. One October, for many successive days, I saw one carrying into his hole buckwheat which he had stolen from a near field. The hole was only a few rods from where we were getting out stone, and as our work progressed, and the racket and uproar increased, the chipmunk became alarmed. He ceased carrying in, and after much hesitating and darting about, and some prolonged absences, he began to carry out; he had determined to move; if the mountain fell, he, at least, would be away in time. So, by mouthfuls or cheekfuls, the grain was transferred to a new place. He did not make a "bee" to get it done, but carried it all himself, occupying several days, and making a trip about every ten minutes.

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The red and gray squirrels do not lay by winter stores ; their cheeks are made without pockets, and whatever they transport is carried in the teeth. They are more or less active all winter, but October and November are their festal months. Invade some butternut or hickory-nut grove on a frosty October morning, and hear the red squirrel beat the "juba" on a horizontal branch. It is a most lively jig, what the boys call a "regular break-down," interspersed with squeals and snickers and derisive laughter. The most noticeable peculiarity about the vocal part of it is the fact that it is a kind of duet. In other words, by some ventriloquial tricks, he appears to accompany himself, as if his voice split up, a part forming a low guttural sound, and a part a shrill nasal sound.

The distant bark of the more wary gray squirrel may be heard about the same time. There is a teasing and ironical tone in it also, but the gray squirrel is not the Puck the red is.

Insects also go into winter-quarters by or before this time ; the bumble-bee, hornet, and wasp. But here only royalty escapes ; the queen-mother alone foresees the night of winter coming and the morning of spring beyond. The rest of the tribe try gypsy-ing for a while, but perish in the first frosts. The present October I surprised the queen of the yellow-jackets in the woods looking out a suitable retreat. The royal dame was house-hunting, and, on being

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disturbed by my inquisitive poking among the leaves, she got up and flew away with a slow, deep hum. Her body was unusually distended, whether with fat or eggs I am unable to say. In September I took down the nest of the black hornet and found several large queens in it, but the workers had all gone. The queens were evidently weathering the first frosts and storms here, and waiting for the Indian summer to go forth and seek a permanent winter abode. If the covers could be taken off the fields and woods at this season, how many interesting facts of natural history would be revealed! — the crickets, ants, bees, reptiles, animals, and, for aught I know, the spiders and flies asleep or getting ready to sleep in their winter dormitories; the fires of life banked up, and burning just enough to keep the spark over till spring.

The fish all run down the stream in the fall except the trout; it runs up or stays up and spawns in November, the male becoming as brilliantly tinted as the deepest-dyed maple leaf. I have often wondered why the trout spawns in the fall, instead of in the spring like other fish. Is it not because a full supply of clear spring water can be counted on at that season more than at any other? The brooks are not so liable to be suddenly muddied by heavy showers, and defiled with the washings of the roads and fields, as they are in spring and summer. The artificial breeder finds that absolute purity of water

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is necessary to hatch the spawn ; also that shade and a low temperature are indispensable.

Our northern November day itself is like spring water. It is melted frost, dissolved snow. There is a chill in it and an exhilaration also. The forenoon is all morning and the afternoon all evening. The shadows seem to come forth and to revenge themselves upon the day. The sunlight is diluted with darkness. The colors fade from the landscape, and only the sheen of the river lights up the gray and brown distance.

VII

THE APPLE

Lo! sweetened with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in silent autumn night.

TENNYSON.

NOT a little of the sunshine of our northern winters is surely wrapped up in the apple. How could we winter over without it? How is life sweetened by its mild acids! A cellar well filled with apples is more valuable than a chamber filled with flax and wool. So much sound, ruddy life to draw upon, to strike one's roots down into, as it were.

Especially to those whose soil of life is inclined to be a little clayey and heavy, is the apple a winter necessity. It is the natural antidote of most of the ills the flesh is heir to. Full of vegetable acids and aromatics, qualities which act as refrigerants and antiseptics, what an enemy it is to jaundice, indigestion, torpidity of liver, etc.! It is a gentle spur and tonic to the whole biliary system. Then I have read that it has been found by analysis to contain more phosphorus than any other vegetable. This makes it the proper food of the scholar and

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the sedentary man; it feeds his brain and it stimulates his liver. Nor is this all. Besides its hygienic properties, the apple is full of sugar and mucilage, which make it highly nutritious. It is said "the operators of Cornwall, England, consider ripe apples nearly as nourishing as bread, and far more so than potatoes. In the year 1801—which was a year of much scarcity—apples, instead of being converted into cider, were sold to the poor, and the laborers asserted that they could 'stand their work' on baked apples without meat; whereas a potato diet required either meat or some other substantial nutriment. The French and Germans use apples extensively; so do the inhabitants of all European nations. The laborers depend upon them as an article of food, and frequently make a dinner of sliced apples and bread."

Yet the English apple is a tame and insipid affair, compared with the intense, sun-colored, and sun-steeped fruit our orchards yield. The English have no sweet apple, I am told, the saccharine element apparently being less abundant in vegetable nature in that sour and chilly climate than in our own.

It is well known that the European maple yields no sugar, while both our birch and hickory have sweet in their veins. Perhaps this fact accounts for our excessive love of sweets, which may be said to be a national trait.

The Russian apple has a lovely complexion.

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smooth and transparent, but the Cossack is not yet all eliminated from it. The only one I have seen — the Duchess of Oldenburg — is as beautiful as a Tartar princess, with a distracting odor, but it is the least bit puckery to the taste.

The best thing I know about Chili is, not its guano beds, but this fact which I learn from Darwin's "Voyage," namely, that the apple thrives well there. Darwin saw a town there so completely buried in a wood of apple-trees, that its streets were merely paths in an orchard. The tree, indeed, thrives so well, that large branches cut off in the spring and planted two or three feet deep in the ground send out roots and develop into fine, full-bearing trees by the third year. The people know the value of the apple, too. They make cider and wine of it, and then from the refuse a white and finely flavored spirit ; then, by another process, a sweet treacle is obtained, called honey. The children and the pigs eat little or no other food. He does not add that the people are healthy and temperate, but I have no doubt they are. We knew the apple had many virtues, but these Chilians have really opened a deep beneath a deep. We had found out the cider and the spirits, but who guessed the wine and the honey, unless it were the bees ? There is a variety in our orchards called the winesap, a doubly liquid name that suggests what might be done with this fruit.

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The apple is the commonest and yet the most varied and beautiful of fruits. A dish of them is as becoming to the centre-table in winter as was the vase of flowers in the summer, — a bouquet of spitzenburgs and greenings and northern spies. A rose when it blooms, the apple is a rose when it ripens. It pleases every sense to which it can be addressed, the touch, the smell, the sight, the taste; and when it falls, in the still October days, it pleases the ear. It is a call to a banquet, it is a signal that the feast is ready. The bough would fain hold it, but it can now assert its independence; it can now live a life of its own.

Daily the stem relaxes its hold, till finally it lets go completely and down comes the painted sphere with a mellow thump to the earth, toward which it has been nodding so long. It bounds away to seek its bed, to hide under a leaf, or in a tuft of grass. It will now take time to meditate and ripen! What delicious thoughts it has there nestled with its fellows under the fence, turning acid into sugar, and sugar into wine!

How pleasing to the touch! I love to stroke its polished rondure with my hand, to carry it in my pocket on my tramp over the winter hills, or through the early spring woods. You are company, you red-cheeked spitz, or you salmon-fleshed greening! I toy with you; press your face to mine, toss you in the air, roll you on the ground, see you shine out

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where you lie amid the moss and dry leaves and sticks. You are so alive! You glow like a ruddy flower. You look so animated I almost expect to see you move! I postpone the eating of you, you are so beautiful! How compact; how exquisitely tinted! Stained by the sun and varnished against the rains. An independent vegetable existence, alive and vascular as my own flesh; capable of being wounded, bleeding, wasting away, or almost of repairing damages!

How it resists the cold! holding out almost as long as the red cheeks of the boys do. A frost that destroys the potatoes and other roots only makes the apple more crisp and vigorous; it peeps out from the chance November snows unscathed. When I see the fruit-vender on the street corner stamping his feet and beating his hands to keep them warm, and his naked apples lying exposed to the blasts, I wonder if they do not ache, too, to clap their hands and enliven their circulation. But they can stand it nearly as long as the vender can.

Noble common fruit, best friend of man and most loved by him, following him, like his dog or his cow, wherever he goes! His homestead is not planted till you are planted, your roots intertwine with his; thriving best where he thrives best, loving the limestone and the frost, the plow and the pruning-knife: you are indeed suggestive of hardy, cheerful industry, and a healthy life in the open air. Temperate,

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chaste fruit! you mean neither luxury nor sloth, neither satiety nor indolence, neither enervating heats nor the frigid zones. Uncloying fruit, — fruit whose best sauce is the open air, whose finest flavors only he whose taste is sharpened by brisk work or walking knows; winter fruit, when the fire of life burns brightest; fruit always a little hyperborean, leaning toward the cold; bracing, sub-acid, active fruit! I think you must come from the north, you are so frank and honest, so sturdy and appetizing. You are stocky and homely like the northern races. Your quality is Saxon. Surely the fiery and impetuous south is not akin to you. Not spices or olives, or the sumptuous liquid fruits, but the grass, the snow, the grains, the coolness, is akin to you. I think if I could subsist on you, or the like of you, I should never have an intemperate or ignoble thought, never be feverish or despondent. So far as I could absorb or transmute your quality, I should be cheerful, continent, equitable, sweet-blooded, long-lived, and should shed warmth and contentment around.

Is there any other fruit that has so much facial expression as the apple? What boy does not more than half believe they can see with that single eye of theirs? Do they not look and nod to him from the bough? The swaar has one look, the rambo another, the spy another. The youth recognizes the seek-no-further, buried beneath a dozen other varieties, the moment he catches a glance of its eye,

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or the bonny-cheeked Newtown pippin, or the gentle but sharp-nosed gillyflower. He goes to the great bin in the cellar, and sinks his shafts here and there in the garnered wealth of the orchards, mining for his favorites, sometimes coming plump upon them, sometimes catching a glimpse of them to the right or left, or uncovering them as keystones in an arch made up of many varieties.

In the dark he can usually tell them by the sense of touch. There is not only the size and shape, but there is the texture and polish. Some apples are coarse-grained and some are fine; some are thin-skinned and some are thick. One variety is quick and vigorous beneath the touch, another gentle and yielding. The pinnock has a thick skin with a spongy lining; a bruise in it becomes like a piece of cork. The tallow apple has an unctuous feel, as its name suggests. It sheds water like a duck. What apple is that with a fat curved stem that blends so prettily with its own flesh, — the wine apple? Some varieties impress me as masculine, — weather-stained, freckled, lasting, and rugged; others are indeed lady apples, fair, delicate, shining, mild-flavored, white-meated, like the egg-drop and the lady-finger. The practiced hand knows each kind by the touch.

Do you remember the apple hole in the garden or back of the house, Ben Bolt? In the fall, after the bins in the cellar had been well stocked, we exca-

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vated a circular pit in the warm mellow earth, and, covering the bottom with clean rye straw, emptied in basketful after basketful of hardy choice varieties, till there was a tent-shaped mound several feet high of shining variegated fruit. Then, wrapping it about with a thick layer of long rye straw, and tucking it up snug and warm, the mound was covered with a thin coating of earth, a flat stone on the top holding down the straw. As winter set in, another coating of earth was put upon it, with perhaps an overcoat of coarse dry stable manure, and the precious pile was left in silence and darkness till spring. No marmot, hibernating under ground in his nest of leaves and dry grass, more cozy and warm. No frost, no wet, but fragrant privacy and quiet. Then how the earth tempers and flavors the apples! It draws out all the acrid unripe qualities, and infuses into them a subtle refreshing taste of the soil. Some varieties perish, but the ranker, hardier kinds, like the northern spy, the greening, or the black apple, or the russet, or the pinnock, how they ripen and grow in grace, how the green becomes gold, and the bitter becomes sweet!

As the supply in the bins and barrels gets low and spring approaches, the buried treasures in the garden are remembered. With spade and axe we go out and penetrate through the snow and frozen earth till the inner dressing of straw is laid bare. It is not quite as clear and bright as when we placed it

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there last fall, but the fruit beneath, which the hand soon exposes, is just as bright and far more luscious. Then, as day after day you resort to the hole, and, removing the straw and earth from the opening, thrust your arm into the fragrant pit, you have a better chance than ever before to become acquainted with your favorites by the sense of touch. How you feel for them, reaching to the right and left! Now you have got a Talman sweet; you imagine you can feel that single meridian line that divides it into two hemispheres. Now a greening fills your hand; you feel its fine quality beneath its rough coat. Now you have hooked a swaar, you recognize its full face; now a Vandevere or a King rolls down from the apex above and you bag it at once. When you were a schoolboy, you stowed these away in your pockets, and ate them along the road and at recess, and again at noontime; and they, in a measure, corrected the effects of the cake and pie with which your indulgent mother filled your lunch-basket.

The boy is indeed the true apple-eater, and is not to be questioned how he came by the fruit with which his pockets are filled. It belongs to him, and he may steal it if it cannot be had in any other way. His own juicy flesh craves the juicy flesh of the apple. Sap draws sap. His fruit-eating has little reference to the state of his appetite. Whether he be full of meat or empty of meat, he wants the apple

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just the same. Before meal or after meal it never comes amiss. The farm-boy munches apples all day long. He has nests of them in the haymow, mellowing, to which he makes frequent visits. Sometimes old Brindle, having access through the open door, smells them out and makes short work of them.

In some countries the custom remains of placing a rosy apple in the hand of the dead, that they may find it when they enter paradise. In northern mythology the giants eat apples to keep off old age.

The apple is indeed the fruit of youth. As we grow old we crave apples less. It is an ominous sign. When you are ashamed to be seen eating them on the street; when you can carry them in your pocket and your hand not constantly find its way to them; when your neighbor has apples and you have none, and you make no nocturnal visits to his orchard; when your lunch-basket is without them, and you can pass a winter's night by the fireside with no thought of the fruit at your elbow, — then be assured you are no longer a boy, either in heart or in years.

The genuine apple-eater comforts himself with an apple in its season, as others do with a pipe or a cigar. When he has nothing else to do, or is bored, he eats an apple. While he is waiting for the train he eats an apple, sometimes several of them. When he takes a walk he arms himself with apples. His

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traveling-bag is full of apples. He offers an apple to his companion, and takes one himself. They are his chief solace when on the road. He sows their seed all along the route. He tosses the core from the car window and from the top of the stage-coach. He would, in time, make the land one vast orchard. He dispenses with a knife. He prefers that his teeth shall have the first taste. Then he knows that the best flavor is immediately beneath the skin, and that in a pared apple this is lost. If you will stew the apple, he says, instead of baking it, by all means leave the skin on. It improves the color and vastly heightens the flavor of the dish.

The apple is a masculine fruit; hence women are poor apple-eaters. It belongs to the open air, and requires an open-air taste and relish.

I instantly sympathized with that clergyman I read of, who, on pulling out his pocket-handkerchief in the midst of his discourse, pulled out two bouncing apples with it that went rolling across the pulpit floor and down the pulpit stairs. These apples were, no doubt, to be eaten after the sermon, on his way home, or to his next appointment. They would take the taste of it out of his mouth. Then, would a minister be apt to grow tiresome with two big apples in his coat-tail pockets? Would he not naturally hasten along to "lastly" and the big apples? If they were the dominie apples, and it was April or May, he certainly would.

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How the early settlers prized the apple! When their trees broke down or were split asunder by the storms, the neighbors turned out, the divided tree was put together again and fastened with iron bolts. In some of the oldest orchards one may still occasionally see a large dilapidated tree with the rusty iron bolt yet visible. Poor, sour fruit, too, but sweet in those early pioneer days. My grandfather, who was one of these heroes of the stump, used every fall to make a journey of forty miles for a few apples, which he brought home in a bag on horseback. He frequently started from home by two or three o'clock in the morning, and at one time both he and his horse were much frightened by the screaming of panthers in a narrow pass in the mountains through which the road led.

Emerson, I believe, has spoken of the apple as the social fruit of New England. Indeed, what a promoter or abettor of social intercourse among our rural population the apple has been, the company growing more merry and unrestrained as soon as the basket of apples was passed round! When the cider followed, the introduction and good understanding were complete. Then those rural gatherings that enlivened the autumn in the country, known as "apple-cuts," now, alas! nearly obsolete, where so many things were cut and dried besides apples! The larger and more loaded the orchard, the more frequently the invitations went round and

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the higher the social and convivial spirit ran. Ours is eminently a country of the orchard. Horace Greeley said he had seen no land in which the orchard formed such a prominent feature in the rural and agricultural districts. Nearly every farmhouse in the Eastern and Northern States has its setting or its background of apple-trees, which generally date back to the first settlement of the farm. Indeed, the orchard, more than almost any other thing, tends to soften and humanize the country, and to give the place of which it is an adjunct a settled, domestic look. The apple-tree takes the rawness and wildness off any scene. On the top of a mountain, or in remote pastures, it sheds the sentiment of home. It never loses its domestic air, or lapses into a wild state. And in planting a homestead, or in choosing a building-site for the new house, what a help it is to have a few old, maternal apple-trees near by, — regular old grandmothers, who have seen trouble, who have been sad and glad through so many winters and summers, who have blossomed till the air about them is sweeter than elsewhere, and borne fruit till the grass beneath them has become thick and soft from human contact, and who have nourished robins and finches in their branches till they have a tender, brooding look! The ground, the turf, the atmosphere of an old orchard, seem several stages nearer to man than that of the adjoining field, as if the trees had given back to the soil more than

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they had taken from it; as if they had tempered the elements, and attracted all the genial and beneficent influences in the landscape around.

An apple orchard is sure to bear you several crops beside the apple. There is the crop of sweet and tender reminiscences, dating from childhood and spanning the seasons from May to October, and making the orchard a sort of outlying part of the household. You have played there as a child, mused there as a youth or lover, strolled there as a thoughtful, sad-eyed man. Your father, perhaps, planted the trees, or reared them from the seed, and you yourself have pruned and grafted them, and worked among them, till every separate tree has a peculiar history and meaning in your mind. Then there is the never-failing crop of birds, — robins, goldfinches, kingbirds, cedar-birds, hairbirds, orioles, starlings, — all nesting and breeding in its branches, and fitly described by Wilson Flagg as “Birds of the Garden and Orchard.” Whether the pippin and sweet bough bear or not, the “punctual birds” can always be depended on. Indeed, there are few better places to study ornithology than in the orchard. Besides its regular occupants, many of the birds of the deeper forest find occasion to visit it during the season. The cuckoo comes for the tent-caterpillar, the jay for frozen apples, the ruffed grouse for buds, the crow foraging for birds’ eggs, the woodpecker and chickadees for their food, and

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the high-hole for ants. The redbird comes, too, if only to see what a friendly covert its branches form; and the wood thrush now and then comes out of the grove near by, and nests alongside of its cousin, the robin. The smaller hawks know that this is a most likely spot for their prey, and in spring the shy northern warblers may be studied as they pause to feed on the fine insects amid its branches. The mice love to dwell here also, and hither come from the near woods the squirrel and the rabbit. The latter will put his head through the boy's slipper-noose any time for a taste of the sweet apple, and the red squirrel and chipmunk esteem its seeds a great rarity.

All the domestic animals love the apple, but none so much as the cow. The taste of it wakes her up as few other things do, and bars and fences must be well looked after. No need to assort them or to pick out the ripe ones for her. An apple is an apple, and there is no best about it. I heard of a quick-witted old cow that learned to shake them down from the tree. While rubbing herself she had observed that an apple sometimes fell. This stimulated her to rub a little harder, when more apples fell. She then took the hint, and rubbed her shoulder with such vigor that the farmer had to check her and keep an eye on her, to save his fruit.

But the cow is the friend of the apple. How many trees she has planted about the farm, in the

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edge of the woods, and in remote fields and pastures! The wild apples, celebrated by Thoreau, are mostly of her planting. She browses them down, to be sure, but they are hers, and why should she not?

What an individuality the apple-tree has, each variety being nearly as marked by its form as by its fruit. What a vigorous grower, for instance, is the Ribston pippin, an English apple, — wide-branching like the oak; its large ridgy fruit, in late fall or early winter, is one of my favorites. Or the thick and more pendent top of the bellflower, with its equally rich, sprightly, *uncloying* fruit.

Sweet apples are perhaps the most nutritious, and when baked are a feast in themselves. With a tree of the Jersey sweet or of the Talman sweet in bearing, no man's table need be devoid of luxuries and one of the most wholesome of all desserts. Or the red astrachan, an August apple, — what a gap may be filled in the culinary department of a household at this season by a single tree of this fruit! And what a feast is its shining crimson coat to the eye before its snow-white flesh has reached the tongue! But the apple of apples for the household is the spitzenburg. In this casket Pomona has put her highest flavors. It can stand the ordeal of cooking, and still remain a spitz. I recently saw a barrel of these apples from the orchard of a fruit-grower in the northern part of New York, who has devoted

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especial attention to this variety. They were perfect gems. Not large, — that had not been the aim, — but small, fair, uniform, and red to the core. How intense, how spicy and aromatic!

But all the excellences of the apple are not confined to the cultivated fruit. Occasionally a seedling springs up about the farm that produces fruit of rare beauty and worth. In sections peculiarly adapted to the apple, like a certain belt along the Hudson River, I have noticed that most of the wild, unbidden trees bear good, edible fruit. In cold and ungenial districts the seedlings are mostly sour and crabbed, but in more favorable soils they are oftener mild and sweet. I know wild apples that ripen in August, and that do not need, if it could be had, Thoreau's sauce of sharp, November air to be eaten with. At the foot of a hill near me, and striking its roots deep in the shale, is a giant specimen of native tree that bears an apple that has about the clearest, waxiest, most transparent complexion I ever saw. It is of good size, and the color of a tea rose. Its quality is best appreciated in the kitchen. I know another seedling of excellent quality, and so remarkable for its firmness and density that it is known on the farm where it grows as the "heavy apple."

I have alluded to Thoreau, to whom all lovers of the apple and its tree are under obligation. His chapter on Wild Apples is a most delicious piece of

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writing. It has a "tang and smack" like the fruit it celebrates, and is dashed and streaked with color in the same manner. It has the hue and perfume of the crab, and the richness and raciness of the pippin. But Thoreau loved other apples than the wild sorts, and was obliged to confess that his favorites could not be eaten indoors. Late in November he found a blue-pearmain tree growing within the edge of a swamp, almost as good as wild. "You would not suppose," he says, "that there was any fruit left there on the first survey, but you must look according to system. Those which lie exposed are quite brown and rotten now, or perchance a few still show one blooming cheek here and there amid the wet leaves. Nevertheless, with experienced eyes I explore amid the bare alders, and the huckleberry bushes, and the withered sedge, and in the crevices of the rocks, which are full of leaves, and pry under the fallen and decaying ferns which, with apple and alder leaves, thickly strew the ground. For I know that they lie concealed, fallen into hollows long since, and covered up by the leaves of the tree itself, — a proper kind of packing. From these lurking-places, anywhere within the circumference of the tree, I draw forth the fruit all wet and glossy, maybe nibbled by rabbits and hollowed out by crickets, and perhaps with a leaf or two cemented to it (as Curzon an old manuscript from a monastery's mouldy cellar), but still with a rich bloom on it,

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and at least as ripe and well kept, if not better than those in barrels, more crisp and lively than they. If these resources fail to yield anything, I have learned to look between the bases of the suckers which spring thickly from some horizontal limb, for now and then one lodges there, or in the very midst of an alder-clump, where they are covered by leaves, safe from cows which may have smelled them out. If I am sharp-set, — for I do not refuse the blue-pearmain, — I fill my pockets on each side ; and as I retrace my steps in the frosty eve, being perhaps four or five miles from home, I eat one first from this side, and then from that, to keep my balance.”

VIII
AN OCTOBER ABROAD

I

MELLOW ENGLAND

I WILL say at the outset, as I believe some one else has said on a like occasion, that in this narrative I shall probably describe myself more than the objects I look upon. The facts and particulars of the case have already been set down in the guide-books and in innumerable books of travel. I shall only attempt to give an account of the pleasure and satisfaction I had in coming face to face with things in the mother country, seeing them as I did with kindred and sympathizing eyes.

The ocean was a dread fascination to me, — a world whose dominion I had never entered; but I proved to be such a wretched sailor that I am obliged to confess, Hibernian fashion, that the happiest moment I spent upon the sea was when I set my foot upon the land.

It is a wide and fearful gulf that separates the two worlds. The landsman can know little of the wildness, savageness, and mercilessness of nature

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till he has been upon the sea. It is as if he had taken a leap off into the interstellar spaces. In voyaging to Mars or Jupiter, he might cross such a desert, — might confront such awful purity and coldness. An astronomic solitariness and remoteness encompass the sea. The earth and all remembrance of it is blotted out; there is no hint of it anywhere. This is not water, this cold, blue-black, vitreous liquid. It suggests, not life, but death. Indeed, the regions of everlasting ice and snow are not more cold and inhuman than is the sea.

Almost the only thing about my first sea voyage that I remember with pleasure is the circumstance of the little birds that, during the first few days out, took refuge on the steamer. The first afternoon, just as we were losing sight of land, a delicate little wood-bird, the black and white creeping warbler, — having lost its reckoning in making perhaps its first southern voyage, — came aboard. It was much fatigued, and had a disheartened, demoralized look. After an hour or two it disappeared, having, I fear, a hard pull to reach the land in the face of the wind that was blowing, if indeed it reached it at all.

The next day, just at night, I observed a small hawk sailing about conveniently near the vessel, but with a very lofty, independent mien, as if he had just happened that way on his travels, and was only lingering to take a good view of us. It was

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amusing to observe his coolness and haughty unconcern in that sad plight he was in; by nothing in his manner betraying that he was several hundred miles at sea, and did not know how he was going to get back to land. But presently I noticed he found it not inconsistent with his dignity to alight on the rigging under friendly cover of the tops'l, where I saw his feathers rudely ruffled by the wind, till darkness set in. If the sailors did not disturb him during the night, he certainly needed all his fortitude in the morning to put a cheerful face on his situation.

The third day, when we were perhaps off Nova Scotia or Newfoundland, the American pipit or titlark, from the far north, a brown bird about the size of a sparrow, dropped upon the deck of the ship, so nearly exhausted that one of the sailors was on the point of covering it with his hat. It stayed about the vessel nearly all day, flitting from point to point, or hopping along a few feet in front of the promenaders, and prying into every crack and crevice for food. Time after time I saw it start off with a reassuring chirp, as if determined to seek the land; but before it had got many rods from the ship its heart would seem to fail it, and, after circling about for a few moments, back it would come, more discouraged than ever.

These little waifs from the shore! I gazed upon them with a strange, sad interest. They were

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friends in distress ; but the sea-birds, skimming along indifferent to us, or darting in and out among those watery hills, I seemed to look upon as my natural enemies. They were the nurslings and favorites of the sea, and I had no sympathy with them.

No doubt the number of our land-birds that actually perish in the sea during their autumn migration, being carried far out of their course by the prevailing westerly winds of this season, is very great. Occasionally one makes the passage to Great Britain by following the ships, and finding them at convenient distances along the route ; and I have been told that over fifty different species of our more common birds, such as robins, starlings, grosbeaks, thrushes, etc., have been found in Ireland, having, of course, crossed in this way. What numbers of these little navigators of the air are misled and wrecked, during those dark and stormy nights, on the lighthouses alone that line the Atlantic coast ! Is it Celia Thaxter who tells of having picked up her apron full of sparrows, warblers, flycatchers, etc., at the foot of the lighthouse on the Isles of Shoals, one morning after a storm, the ground being still strewn with birds of all kinds that had dashed themselves against the beacon, bewildered and fascinated by its tremendous light ?

If a land-bird perishes at sea, a sea-bird is equally cast away upon the land ; and I have known the

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sooty tern, with its almost omnipotent wing, to fall down, utterly famished and exhausted, two hundred miles from salt water.

But my interest in these things did not last beyond the third day. About this time we entered what the sailors call the "devil's hole," and a very respectably sized hole it is, extending from the banks of Newfoundland to Ireland, and in all seasons and weathers it seems to be well stirred up.

Amidst the tossing and rolling, the groaning of penitent travelers, and the laboring of the vessel as she climbed those dark unstable mountains, my mind reverted feebly to Huxley's statement, that the bottom of this sea, for over a thousand miles, presents to the eye of science a vast chalk plain, over which one might drive as over a floor, and I tried to solace myself by dwelling upon the spectacle of a solitary traveler whipping up his steed across it. The imaginary rattle of his wagon was like the sound of lutes and harps, and I would rather have clung to his axletree than have been rocked in the best berth in the ship.

LAND

On the tenth day, about four o'clock in the afternoon, we sighted Ireland. The ship came up from behind the horizon, where for so many days she had been buffeting with the winds and the waves, but had never lost the clew, bearing straight as an arrow

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for the mark. I think, if she had been aimed at a fair-sized artillery target, she would have crossed the ocean and struck the bull's-eye.

In Ireland, instead of an emerald isle rising out of the sea, I beheld a succession of cold, purplish mountains, stretching along the northeastern horizon, but I am bound to say that no tints of bloom or verdure were ever half so welcome to me as were those dark, heather-clad ranges. It is a feeling which a man can have but once in his life, when he first sets eyes upon a foreign land ; and in my case, to this feeling was added the delightful thought that the "devil's hole" would soon be cleared and my long fast over.

Presently, after the darkness had set in, signal rockets were let off from the stern of the vessel, writing their burning messages upon the night ; and when answering rockets rose slowly up far ahead, I suppose we all felt that the voyage was essentially done, and no doubt a message flashed back under the ocean that the Scotia had arrived.

The sight of the land had been such medicine to me that I could now hold up my head and walk about, and so went down for the first time and took a look at the engines, — those twin monsters that had not stopped once, or apparently varied their stroke at all, since leaving Sandy Hook ; I felt like patting their enormous cranks and shafts with my hand, — then at the coal bunks, vast cavernous

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recesses in the belly of the ship, like the chambers of the original mine in the mountains, and saw the men and firemen at work in a sort of purgatory of heat and dust. When it is remembered that one of these ocean steamers consumes about one hundred tons of coal per day, it is easy to imagine what a burden the coal for a voyage alone must be, and one is not at all disposed to laugh at Dr. Lardner, who proved so convincingly that no steamship could ever cross the ocean, because it could not carry coal enough to enable it to make the passage.

On the morrow, a calm, lustrous day, we steamed at our leisure up the Channel and across the Irish Sea, the coast of Wales, and her groups of lofty mountains, in full view nearly all day. The mountains were in profile like the Catskills viewed from the Hudson below, only it was evident there were no trees or shrubbery upon them, and their summits, on this last day of September, were white with snow.

ASHORE

The first day or half day ashore is, of course, the most novel and exciting ; but who, as Mr. Higginson says, can describe his sensations and emotions this first half day ? It is a page of travel that has not yet been written. Paradoxical as it may seem, one generally comes out of pickle much fresher than he went in. The sea has given him an enormous

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appetite for the land. Every one of his senses is like a hungry wolf clamorous to be fed. For my part, I had suddenly emerged from a condition bordering on that of the hibernating animals — a condition in which I had neither eaten, nor slept, nor thought, nor moved, when I could help it — into not only a full, but a keen and joyous, possession of my health and faculties. It was almost a metamorphosis. I was no longer the clod I had been, but a bird exulting in the earth and air, and in the liberty of motion. Then to remember it was a new earth and a new sky that I was beholding, — that it was England, the old mother at last, no longer a faith or a fable, but an actual fact there before my eyes and under my feet, — why should I not exult? Go to! I will be indulged. Those trees, those fields, that bird darting along the hedge-rows, those men and boys picking blackberries in October, those English flowers by the roadside (stop the carriage while I leap out and pluck them), the homely, domestic looks of things, those houses, those queer vehicles, those thick-coated horses, those big-footed, coarsely clad, clear-skinned men and women, this massive, homely, compact architecture, — let me have a good look, for this is my first hour in England, and I am drunk with the joy of seeing! This house-fly even, let me inspect it;¹ and that swallow

¹ The English house-fly actually seemed coarser and more hairy than ours.

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skimming along so familiarly, — is he the same I saw trying to cling to the sails of the vessel the third day out? or is the swallow the swallow the world over? This grass I certainly have seen before, and this red and white clover, but this daisy and dandelion are not the same; and I have come three thousand miles to see the mullein cultivated in a garden, and christened the velvet plant.

As we sped through the land, the heart of England, toward London, I thought my eyes would never get their fill of the landscape, and that I would lose them out of my head by their eagerness to catch every object as we rushed along! How they reveled, how they followed the birds and the game, how they glanced ahead on the track — that marvelous track! — or shot off over the fields and downs, finding their delight in the streams, the roads, the bridges, the splendid breeds of cattle and sheep in the fields, the superb husbandry, the rich mellow soil, the drainage, the hedges, — in the inconspicuousness of any given feature, and the mellow tone and homely sincerity of all; now dwelling fondly upon the groups of neatly modeled stacks, then upon the field occupations, the gathering of turnips and cabbages, or the digging of potatoes, — how I longed to turn up the historic soil, into which had passed the sweat and virtue of so many generations, with my own spade, — then upon the quaint, old, thatched houses, or the cluster of tiled roofs,

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then catching at a church spire across a meadow (and it is all meadow), or at the remains of tower or wall overrun with ivy.

Here, something almost human looks out at you from the landscape; Nature here has been so long under the dominion of man, has been taken up and laid down by him so many times, worked over and over with his hands, fed and fattened by his toil and industry, and, on the whole, has proved herself so willing and tractable, that she has taken on something of his image, and seems to radiate his presence. She is completely domesticated, and no doubt loves the titillation of the harrow and plow. The fields look half conscious; and if ever the cattle have "great and tranquil thoughts," as Emerson suggests they do, it must be when lying upon these lawns and meadows. I noticed that the trees, the oaks and elms, looked like fruit trees, or as if they had felt the humanizing influences of so many generations of men, and were betaking themselves from the woods to the orchard. The game is more than half tame, and one could easily understand that it had a keeper.

But the look of those fields and parks went straight to my heart. It is not merely that they were so smooth and cultivated, but that they were so benign and maternal, so redolent of cattle and sheep and of patient, homely farm labor. One gets only here and there a glimpse of such in this coun-

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try. I see occasionally about our farms a patch of an acre or half acre upon which has settled this atmosphere of ripe and loving husbandry; a choice bit of meadow about the barn or orchard, or near the house, which has had some special fattening, perhaps been the site of some former garden, or barn, or homestead, or which has had the wash of some building, where the feet of children have played for generations, and the flocks and herds have been fed in winter, and where they love to lie and ruminate at night, — a piece of sward thick and smooth, and full of warmth and nutriment, where the grass is greenest and freshest in spring, and the hay finest and thickest in summer.

This is the character of the whole of England that I saw. I had been told I should see a garden, but I did not know before to what an extent the earth could become a living repository of the virtues of so many generations of gardeners. The tendency to run to weeds and wild growths seems to have been utterly eradicated from the soil; and if anything were to spring up spontaneously, I think it would be cabbage and turnips, or grass and grain.

And yet, to American eyes, the country seems quite uninhabited, there are so few dwellings and so few people. Such a landscape at home would be dotted all over with thrifty farmhouses, each with its group of painted outbuildings, and along every road and highway would be seen the well-to-do

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turnouts of the independent freeholders. But in England the dwellings of the people, the farmers, are so humble and inconspicuous and are really so far apart, and the halls and the country-seats of the aristocracy are so hidden in the midst of vast estates, that the landscape seems almost deserted, and it is not till you see the towns and great cities that you can understand where so vast a population keeps itself.

Another thing that would be quite sure to strike my eye on this my first ride across British soil, and on all subsequent rides, was the enormous number of birds and fowls of various kinds that swarmed in the air or covered the ground. It was truly amazing. It seemed as if the feathered life of a whole continent must have been concentrated on this island. Indeed, I doubt if a sweeping together of all the birds of the United States into any two of the largest States would people the earth and air more fully. There appeared to be a plover, a crow, a rook, a blackbird, and a sparrow to every square yard of ground. They know the value of birds in Britain, — that they are the friends, not the enemies, of the farmer. It must be the paradise of crows and rooks. It did me good to see them so much at home about the fields and even in the towns. I was glad also to see that the British crow was not a stranger to me, and that he differed from his brother on the American side of the Atlantic only in

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being less alert and cautious, having less use for these qualities.

Now and then the train would start up some more tempting game. A brace or two of partridges or a covey of quails would settle down in the stubble, or a cock pheasant drop head and tail and slide into the copse. Rabbits also would scamper back from the borders of the fields into the thickets or peep slyly out, making my sportsman's fingers tingle.

I have no doubt I should be a notorious poacher in England. How could an American see so much game and not wish to exterminate it entirely as he does at home? But sporting is an expensive luxury here. In the first place a man pays a heavy tax on his gun, nearly or quite half its value; then he has to have a license to hunt, for which he pays smartly; then permission from the owner of the land upon which he wishes to hunt; so that the game is hedged about by a triple safeguard.

An American, also, will be at once struck with the look of greater substantiality and completeness in everything he sees here. No temporizing, no makeshifts, no evidence of hurry, or failure, or contract work; no wood and little paint, but plenty of iron and brick and stone. This people have taken plenty of time, and have built broad and deep, and placed the cap-stone on. All this I had been told, but it pleased me so in the seeing that I must tell it again. It is worth a voyage across the

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Atlantic to see the bridges alone. I believe I had seen little other than wooden bridges before, and in England I saw not one such, but everywhere solid arches of masonry, that were refreshing and reassuring to behold. Even the lanes and byways about the farm, I noticed, crossed the little creeks with a span upon which an elephant would not hesitate to tread, or artillery trains to pass. There is no form so pleasing to look upon as the arch, or that affords so much food and suggestion to the mind. It seems to stimulate the volition, the will-power, and for my part I cannot look upon a noble span without a feeling of envy, for I know the hearts of heroes are thus keyed and fortified. The arch is the symbol of strength and activity, and of rectitude.

In Europe I took a new lease of this feeling, this partiality for the span, and had daily opportunities to indulge and confirm it. In London I had immense satisfaction in observing the bridges there, and in walking over them, firm as the geological strata and as enduring. London Bridge, Waterloo Bridge, Blackfriars, clearing the river in a few gigantic leaps, like things of life and motion, — to pass over one of these bridges, or to sail under it, awakens the emotion of the sublime. I think the moral value of such a bridge as the Waterloo must be inestimable. It seems to me the British Empire itself is stronger for such a bridge, and that all public and private virtues are stronger. In Paris, too, those

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superb monuments over the Seine, — I think they alone ought to inspire the citizens with a love of permanence, and help hold them to stricter notions of law and dependence. No doubt kings and tyrants know the value of these things, and as yet they certainly have the monopoly of them.

LONDON

I am too good a countryman to feel much at home in cities, and usually value them only as conveniences, but for London I conceived quite an affection; perhaps because it is so much like a natural formation itself, and strikes less loudly, or perhaps sharply, upon the senses than our great cities do. It is a forest of brick and stone of the most stupendous dimensions, and one traverses it in the same adventurous kind of way that he does woods and mountains. The maze and tangle of streets is something fearful, and any generalization of them a step not to be hastily taken. My experience heretofore had been that cities generally were fractions that could be greatly reduced, but London I found I could not simplify, and every morning for weeks, when I came out of my hotel, it was a question whether my course lay in this, or in exactly the opposite direction. It has no unit of structure, but is a vast aggregation of streets and houses, or in fact of towns and cities, which have to be mastered in detail. I tried the third or fourth day to get a

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bird's-eye view from the top of St. Paul's, but saw through the rifts in the smoke only a waste, — literally a waste of red tiles and chimney pots. The confusion and desolation were complete.

But I finally mastered the city, in a measure, by the aid of a shilling map, which I carried with me wherever I went, and upon which, when I was lost, I would hunt myself up, thus making in the end a very suggestive and entertaining map. Indeed, every inch of this piece of colored paper is alive to me. If I did not make the map itself, I at least verified it, which is nearly as good, and the verification, on street corner by day and under lamp or by shop window at night, was often a matter of so much concern that I doubt if the original surveyor himself put more heart into certain parts of his work than I did in the proof of them.

London has less metropolitan splendor than New York, and less of the full-blown pride of the shopman. Its stores are not nearly so big, and it has no signboards that contain over one thousand feet of lumber; neither did I see any names painted on the gable ends of the buildings that the man in the moon could read without his opera-glass. I went out one day to look up one of the great publishing houses, and passed it and repassed it several times trying to find the sign. Finally, having made sure of the building, I found the name of the firm cut into the door jamb.

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London seems to have been built and peopled by countrymen, who have preserved all the rural reminiscences possible. All its great streets or avenues are called roads, as King's Road, City Road, Edgware Road, Tottenham Court Road, with innumerable lesser roads. Then there are lanes and walks, and such rural names among the streets as Long Acre, Snowhill, Poultry, Bush-lane, Hill-road, Houndsditch, and not one grand street or imperial avenue.

My visit fell at a most favorable juncture as to weather, there being but few rainy days and but little fog. I had imagined that they had barely enough fair weather in London, at any season, to keep alive the tradition of sunshine and of blue sky, but the October days I spent there were not so very far behind what we have at home at this season. London often puts on a nightcap of smoke and fog, which it pulls down over its ears pretty close at times; and the sun has a habit of lying abed very late in the morning, which all the people imitate; but I remember some very pleasant weather there, and some bright moonlight nights.

I saw but one full-blown characteristic London fog. I was in the National Gallery one day, trying to make up my mind about Turner, when this chimney-pot meteor came down. It was like a great yellow dog taking possession of the world. The light faded from the room, the pictures ran together

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in confused masses of shadow on the walls, and in the street only a dim yellowish twilight prevailed through which faintly twinkled the lights in the shop windows. Vehicles came slowly out of the dirty obscurity on one side and plunged into it on the other. Waterloo Bridge gave one or two leaps and disappeared, and the Nelson Column in Trafalgar Square was obliterated for half its length. Travel was impeded, boats stopped on the river, trains stood still on the track, and for an hour and a half London lay buried beneath this sickening eruption. I say eruption, because a London fog is only a London smoke tempered by a moist atmosphere. It is called "fog" by courtesy, but lampblack is its chief ingredient. It is not wet like our fogs, but quite dry, and makes the eyes smart and the nose tingle. Whenever the sun can be seen through it, his face is red and dirty; seen through a *bona fide* fog, his face is clean and white. English coal — or "coals," as they say here — in burning gives out an enormous quantity of thick, yellowish smoke, which is at no time absorbed or dissipated as it would be in our hard, dry atmosphere, and which at certain times is not absorbed at all, but falls down swollen and augmented by the prevailing moisture. The atmosphere of the whole island is more or less impregnated with smoke, even on the fairest days, and it becomes more and more dense as you approach the great towns. Yet this compound of smut,

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fog, and common air is an elixir of youth; and this is one of the surprises of London, to see amid so much soot and dinginess such fresh, blooming complexions, and in general such a fine physical tone and full-bloodedness among the people, — such as one has come to associate only with the best air and the purest, wholesomest country influences. What the secret of it may be, I am at a loss to know, unless it is that the moist atmosphere does not dry up the blood as our air does, and that the carbon and creosote have some rare antiseptic and preservative qualities, as doubtless they have, that are efficacious in the human physiology. It is no doubt true, also, that the people do not tan in this climate, as in ours, and that the delicate flesh tints show more on that account.

I speak thus of these things with reference to our standards at home, because I found that these standards were ever present in my mind, and that I was unconsciously applying them to whatever I saw and wherever I went, and often, as I shall have occasion to show, to their discredit.

Climate is a great matter, and no doubt many of the differences between the English stock at home and its offshoot in our country are traceable to this source. Our climate is more heady and less stomachic than the English; sharpens the wit, but dries up the fluids and viscera; favors an irregular, nervous energy, but exhausts the animal spirits. It

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is, perhaps, on this account that I have felt since my return how much easier it is to be a dyspeptic here than in Great Britain. One's appetite is keener and more ravenous, and the temptation to bolt one's food greater. The American is not so hearty an eater as the Englishman, but the forces of his body are constantly leaving his stomach in the lurch, and running off into his hands and feet and head. His eyes are bigger than his belly, but an Englishman's belly is a deal bigger than his eyes, and the number of plum puddings and the amount of Welsh rarebit he devours annually would send the best of us to his grave in half that time. We have not enough constitutional inertia and stolidity ; our climate gives us no rest, but goads us day and night ; and the consequent wear and tear of life is no doubt greater in this country than in any other on the globe. We are playing the game more rapidly, and I fear less thoroughly and sincerely, than the mother country.

The more uniform good health of English women is thought to be a matter of exercise in the open air, as walking, riding, driving, but the prime reason is mainly a climatic one, uniform habits of exercise being more easily kept up in that climate than in this, and being less exhaustive, one day with another. You can walk there every day in the year without much discomfort, and the stimulus is about the same. Here it is too hot in summer and too cold

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in winter, or else it keys you up too tight one day and unstrings you the next ; all fire and motion in the morning, and all listlessness and ennui in the afternoon ; a spur one hour and a sedative the next.

A watch will not keep as steady time here as in Britain, and the human clock-work is more liable to get out of repair for the same reason. Our women, especially, break down prematurely, and the decay of maternity in this country is no doubt greater than in any of the oldest civilized communities. One reason, doubtless, is that our women are the greatest slaves of fashion in the whole world, and, in following the whims of that famous courtesan, have the most fickle and destructive climate to contend with.

English women all have good-sized feet, and Englishmen, too, and wear large, comfortable shoes. This was a noticeable feature at once : coarse, loose-fitting clothes of both sexes, and large boots and shoes with low heels. They evidently knew the use of their feet, and had none of the French, or American, or Chinese fastidiousness about this part of their anatomy. I notice that, when a family begins to run out, it turns out its toes, drops off at the heel, shortens its jaw, and dotes on small feet and hands.

Another promoter of health in England is woolen clothes, which are worn the year round, the summer driving people into no such extremities as here. And the good, honest woolen stuffs of one kind and

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another that fill the shops attest the need and the taste that prevail. They had a garment when I was in London called the Ulster overcoat, — a coarse, shaggy, bungling coat, with a skirt reaching nearly to the feet, very ugly, tried by the fashion plates, but very comfortable, and quite the fashion. This very sensible garment has since become well known in America.

The Americans in London were put out with the tailors, and could rarely get suited, on account of the loose cutting and the want of "style." But "style" is the hiatus that threatens to swallow us all one of these days. About the only monstrosity I saw in the British man's dress was the stove-pipe hat, which everybody wears. At first I feared it might be a police regulation, or a requirement of the British Constitution, for I seemed to be about the only man in the kingdom with a soft hat on, and I had noticed that before leaving the steamer every man brought out from its hiding-place one of these polished brain-squeezers. Even the boys wear them, — youths of nine and ten years with little stove-pipe hats on; and at Eton School I saw black swarms of them: even the boys in the field were playing football in stove-pipe hats.

What we call beauty in woman is so much a matter of youth and health that the average of female beauty in London is, I believe, higher than in this country. English women are comely and *good-*

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looking. It is an extremely fresh and pleasant face that you see everywhere, — softer, less clearly and sharply cut than the typical female face in this country, — less *spirituelle*, less perfect in form, but stronger and sweeter. There is more blood, and heart, and substance back of it. The American race of the present generation is doubtless the most *shapely*, both in face and figure, that has yet appeared. American children are far less crude, and lumpy, and awkward-looking than the European children. One generation in this country suffices vastly to improve the looks of the offspring of the Irish or German or Norwegian emigrant. There is surely something in our climate or conditions that speedily refines and sharpens — and, shall I add, hardens? — the human features. The face loses something, but it comes into shape; and of such beauty as is the product of this tendency we can undoubtedly show more, especially in our women, than the parent stock in Europe; while American schoolgirls, I believe, have the most bewitching beauty in the world.

The English plainness of speech is observable even in the signs or notices along the streets. Instead of “Lodging,” “Lodging,” as with us, one sees “Beds,” “Beds,” which has a very homely sound; and in place of “gentlemen’s” this, that, or the other, about public places, the word “men’s” is used.

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I suppose, if it were not for the bond of a written language and perpetual intercourse, the two nations would not be able to understand each other in the course of a hundred years, the inflection and accentuation are so different. I recently heard an English lady say, referring to the American speech, that she could hardly believe her own language could be spoken so strangely.

ARCHITECTURE

One sees right away that the English are a home people, a domestic people; and he does not need to go into their houses or homes to find this out. It is in the air and in the general aspect of things. Everywhere you see the virtue and quality that we ascribe to home-made articles. It seems as if things had been made by hand, and with care and affection, as they have been. The land of caste and kings, there is yet less glitter and display than in this country, less publicity, and, of course, less rivalry and emulation also, for which we pay very dearly. You have got to where the word *homely* preserves its true signification, and is no longer a term of disparagement, but expressive of a cardinal virtue.

I liked the English habit of naming their houses; it shows the importance they attach to their homes. All about the suburbs of London and in the outlying villages I noticed nearly every house and cottage had some appropriate designation, as Terrace

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House, Oaktree House, Ivy Cottage, or some Villa, usually cut into the stone gate-post, and this name is put on the address of the letters. How much better to be known by your name than by your number! I believe the same custom prevails in the country, and is common to the middle classes as well as to the aristocracy. It is a good feature. A house or a farm with an appropriate name, which everybody recognizes, must have an added value and importance.

Modern English houses are less showy than ours, and have more weight and permanence, — no flat roofs and no painted outside shutters. Indeed, that pride of American country people, and that abomination in the landscape, a white house with green blinds, I did not see a specimen of in England. They do not aim to make their houses conspicuous, but the contrary. They make a large, yellowish brick that has a pleasing effect in the wall. Then a very short space of time in that climate suffices to take off the effect of newness, and give a mellow, sober hue to the building. Another advantage of the climate is that it permits outside plastering. Thus almost any stone may be imitated, and the work endure for ages ; while our sudden changes, and extremes of heat and cold, of dampness and dryness, will cause the best work of this kind to peel off in a few years.

Then this people have better taste in building

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than we have, perhaps because they have the noblest samples and specimens of architecture constantly before them, — those old feudal castles and royal residences, for instance. I was astonished to see how homely and good they looked, how little they challenged admiration, and how much they emulated rocks and trees. They were surely built in a simpler and more poetic age than this. It was like meeting some plain, natural nobleman after contact with one of the bedizened, artificial sort. The Tower of London, for instance, is as pleasing to the eye, has the same fitness and harmony, as a hut in the woods; and I should think an artist might have the same pleasure in copying it into his picture as he would in copying a pioneer's log cabin. So with Windsor Castle, which has the beauty of a ledge of rocks, and crowns the hill like a vast natural formation. The warm, simple interior, too, of these castles and palaces, the honest oak without paint or varnish, the rich wood carvings, the ripe human tone and atmosphere, — how it all contrasts, for instance, with the showy, gilded, cast-iron interior of our commercial or political palaces, where everything that smacks of life or nature is studiously excluded under the necessity of making the building fire-proof.

I was not less pleased with the higher ornamental architecture, — the old churches and cathedrals, — which appealed to me in a way architecture

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had never before done. In fact, I found that I had never seen architecture before, — a building with genius and power in it, and that one could look at with the eye of the imagination. Not mechanics merely, but poets, had wrought and planned here, and the granite was tender with human qualities. The plants and weeds growing in the niches and hollows of the walls, the rooks and martins and jackdaws inhabiting the towers and breeding about the eaves, are but types of the feelings and emotions of the human heart that flit and hover over these old piles, and find affectionate lodgment in them.

Time, of course, has done a great deal for this old architecture. Nature has taken it lovingly to herself, has set her seal upon it, and adopted it into her system. Just the foil which beauty — especially the crystallic beauty of architecture — needs has been given by this hazy, mellowing atmosphere. As the grace and suggestiveness of all objects are enhanced by a fall of snow, — forest, fence, hive, shed, knoll, rock, tree, all being laid under the same white enchantment, — so time has wrought in softening and toning down this old religious architecture, and bringing it into harmony with nature.

Our climate has a much keener edge, both of frost and fire, and touches nothing so gently or creatively; yet time would, no doubt, do much for our architecture, if we would give it a chance, — for that apotheosis of prose, the National Capitol at

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Washington, upon which, I notice, a returned traveler bases our claim to be considered "ahead" of the Old World, even in architecture; but the reigning gods interfere, and each spring or fall give the building a clean shirt in the shape of a coat of white paint. In like manner, other public buildings never become acclimated, but are annually scoured with soap and sand, the national passion for the brightness of newness interfering to defeat any benison which the gods might be disposed to pronounce upon them. Spotlessness, I know, is not a characteristic of our politics, though it is said that whitewashing is, which may account for this ceaseless paint-pot renovation of our public buildings. In a world lit only by the moon, our Capitol would be a paragon of beauty, and the spring whitewashing could also be endured; but under our blazing sun and merciless sky it parches the vision, and makes it turn with a feeling of relief to rocks and trees, or to some weather-stained, dilapidated shed or hovel.

How winningly and picturesquely in comparison the old architecture of London addresses itself to the eye, — St. Paul's Cathedral, for instance, with its vast blotches and stains, as if it had been dipped in some black Lethe of oblivion, and then left to be restored by the rains and the elements! This black Lethe is the London smoke and fog, which has left a dark deposit over all the building, except the upper and more exposed parts, where the original sil-

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very whiteness of the stone shows through, the effect of the whole thus being like one of those graphic Rembrandt photographs or carbons, the prominences in a strong light, and the rest in deepest shadow. I was never tired of looking at this noble building, and of going out of my way to walk around it; but I am at a loss to know whether the pleasure I had in it arose from my love of nature, or from a susceptibility to art for which I had never given myself credit. Perhaps from both, for I seemed to behold Art turning toward and reverently acknowledging Nature, — indeed, in a manner already become Nature.

I believe the critics of such things find plenty of fault with St. Paul's; and even I could see that its bigness was a little prosy, that it suggested the historic rather than the poetic muse; yet, for all that, I could never look at it without a profound emotion. Viewed coolly and critically, it might seem like a vast specimen of Episcopalianism in architecture. Miltonic in its grandeur and proportions, and Miltonic in its prosiness and mongrel classicism also, yet its power and effectiveness are unmistakable. The beholder has no vantage-ground from which to view it, or to take in its total effect, on account of its being so closely beset by such a mob of shops and buildings; yet the glimpses he does get here and there through the opening made by some street, when passing in its vicinity, are very striking and

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suggestive; the thin veil of smoke, which is here as constant and uniform as the atmosphere itself, wrapping it about with the enchantment of time and distance.

The interior I found even more impressive than the exterior, perhaps because I was unprepared for it. I had become used to imposing exteriors at home, and did not reflect that in a structure like this I should see an interior also, and that here alone the soul of the building would be fully revealed. It was Miltonic in the best sense; it was like the mightiest organ music put into form. Such depths, such solemn vastness, such gulfs and abysses of architectural space, the rich, mellow light, the haze outside becoming a mysterious, hallowing presence within, quite mastered me, and I sat down upon a seat, feeling my first genuine cathedral intoxication. As it was really an intoxication, a sense of majesty and power quite overwhelming in my then uncloyed condition, I speak of it the more freely. My companions rushed about as if each one had had a search-warrant in his pocket; but I was content to uncover my head and drop into a seat, and busy my mind with some simple object near at hand, while the sublimity that soared about me stole into my soul and possessed it. My sensation was like that imparted by suddenly reaching a great altitude: there was a sort of relaxation of the muscles, followed by a sense of physical weakness; and after half an hour

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or so I felt compelled to go out into the open air, and leave till another day the final survey of the building. Next day I came back, but there can be only one first time, and I could not again surprise myself with the same feeling of wonder and intoxication. But St. Paul's will bear many visits. I came again and again, and never grew tired of it. Crossing its threshold was entering another world, where the silence and solitude were so profound and overpowering that the noise of the streets outside, or of the stream of visitors, or of the workmen engaged on the statuary, made no impression. They were all belittled, lost, like the humming of flies. Even the afternoon services, the chanting, and the tremendous organ, were no interruption, and left me just as much alone as ever. They only served to set off the silence, to fathom its depth.

The dome of St. Paul's is the original of our dome at Washington ; but externally I think ours is the more graceful, though the effect inside is tame and flat in comparison. This is owing partly to its lesser size and height, and partly to our hard, transparent atmosphere, which lends no charm or illusion, but mainly to the stupid, unimaginative plan of it. Our dome shuts down like an inverted iron pot ; there is no vista, no outlook, no relation, and hence no proportion. You open a door and are in a circular pen, and can look in only one direction, — up. If the iron pot were slashed through here and

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there, or if it rested on a row of tall columns or piers, and were shown to be a legitimate part of the building, it would not appear the exhausted receiver it does now.

The dome of St. Paul's is the culmination of the whole interior of the building. Rising over the central area, it seems to gather up the power and majesty of the nave, the aisles, the transepts, the choir, and give them expression and expansion in its lofty firmament.

Then those colossal piers, forty feet broad some of them, and nearly one hundred feet high, — they easily eclipsed what I had recently seen in a mine, and which I at the time imagined shamed all the architecture of the world, — where the mountain was upheld over a vast space by massive piers left by the miners, with a ceiling unrolled over your head, and apparently descending upon you, that looked like a petrified thunder-cloud.

The view from the upper gallery, or top of the dome, looking down inside, is most impressive. The public are not admitted to this gallery, for fear, the keeper told me, it would become the scene of suicides; people unable to withstand the terrible fascination would leap into the yawning gulf. But, with the privilege usually accorded to Americans, I stepped down into the narrow circle, and, leaning over the balustrade, coolly looked the horrible temptation in the face.

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On the whole, St. Paul's is so vast and imposing that one wonders what occasion or what ceremony can rise to the importance of not being utterly dwarfed within its walls. The annual gathering of the charity children, ten or twelve thousand in number, must make a ripple or two upon its solitude, or an exhibition like the thanksgiving of the Queen, when sixteen or eighteen thousand persons were assembled beneath its roof. But one cannot forget that it is, for the most part, a great toy, — a mammoth shell, whose bigness bears no proportion to the living (if, indeed, it is living), indwelling necessity. It is a tenement so large that the tenant looks cold and forlorn, and in danger of being lost within it.

No such objection can be made to Westminster Abbey, which is a mellow, picturesque old place, the interior arrangement and architecture of which affects one like some ancient, dilapidated forest. Even the sunlight streaming through the dim windows, and falling athwart the misty air, was like the sunlight of a long-gone age. The very atmosphere was pensive, and filled the tall spaces like a memory and a dream. I sat down and listened to the choral service and to the organ, which blended perfectly with the spirit and sentiment of the place.

ON THE SOUTH DOWNS

One of my best days in England was spent amid the singing of skylarks on the South Down Hills,

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near an old town at the mouth of the Little Ouse, where I paused on my way to France. The prospect of hearing one or two of the classical birds of the Old World had not been the least of the attractions of my visit, though I knew the chances were against me so late in the season, and I have to thank my good genius for guiding me to the right place at the right time. To get out of London was delight enough, and then to find myself quite unexpectedly on these soft rolling hills, of a mild October day, in full sight of the sea, with the larks pouring out their gladness overhead, was to me good fortune indeed.

The South Downs form a very remarkable feature of this part of England, and are totally unlike any other landscape I ever saw. I believe it is Huxley who applies to them the epithet of *muttony*, which they certainly deserve, for they are like the backs of immense sheep, smooth, and round, and fat, — so smooth, indeed, that the eye can hardly find a place to take hold of, not a tree, or bush, or fence, or house, or rock, or stone, or other object, for miles and miles, save here and there a group of straw-capped stacks, or a flock of sheep crawling slowly over them, attended by a shepherd and dog, and the only lines visible those which bound the squares where different crops had been gathered. The soil was rich and mellow, like a garden, — hills of chalk with a pellicle of black loam.

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These hills stretch a great distance along the coast, and are cut squarely off by the sea, presenting on this side a chain of white chalk cliffs suggesting the old Latin name of this land, Albion.

Before I had got fifty yards from the station I began to hear the larks, and being unprepared for them I was a little puzzled at first, but was not long discovering what luck I was in. The song disappointed me at first, being less sweet and melodious than I had expected to hear; indeed, I thought it a little sharp and harsh, — a little stubbly, — but in other respects, in strength and gladness and continuity, it was wonderful. And the more I heard it the better I liked it, until I would gladly have given any of my songsters at home for a bird that could shower down such notes, even in autumn. Up, up, went the bird, describing a large easy spiral till he attained an altitude of three or four hundred feet, when, spread out against the sky for a space of ten or fifteen minutes or more, he poured out his delight, filling all the vault with sound. The song is of the sparrow kind, and, in its best parts, perpetually suggested the notes of our vesper sparrow; but the wonder of it is its copiousness and sustained strength. There is no theme, no beginning, middle, or end, like most of our best bird-songs, but a perfect swarm of notes pouring out like bees from a hive, and resembling each other nearly as closely, and only ceasing as the bird nears the

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earth again. We have many more melodious songsters; the bobolink in the meadows for instance, the vesper sparrow in the pastures, the purple finch in the groves, the winter wren, or any of the thrushes in the woods, or the wood-wagtail, whose air song is of a similar character to that of the skylark, and is even more rapid and ringing, and is delivered in nearly the same manner; but our birds all stop when the skylark has only just begun. Away he goes on quivering wing, inflating his throat fuller and fuller, mounting and mounting, and turning to all points of the compass as if to embrace the whole landscape in his song, the notes still raining upon you, as distinct as ever, after you have left him far behind. You feel that you need be in no hurry to observe the song lest the bird finish; you walk along, your mind reverts to other things, you examine the grass and weeds, or search for a curious stone, still there goes the bird; you sit down and study the landscape, or send your thoughts out toward France or Spain, or across the sea to your own land, and yet, when you get them back, there is that song above you, almost as unceasing as the light of a star. This strain indeed suggests some rare pyrotechnic display, musical sounds being substituted for the many-colored sparks and lights. And yet I will add, what perhaps the best readers do not need to be told, that neither the lark-song, nor any other bird-song in the open air and under the sky, is as

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noticeable a feature as my description of it might imply, or as the poets would have us believe; and that most persons, not especially interested in birds or their notes, and intent upon the general beauty of the landscape, would probably pass it by unremarked.

I suspect that it is a little higher flight than the facts will bear out when the writers make the birds go out of sight into the sky. I could easily follow them on this occasion, though, if I took my eye away for a moment, it was very difficult to get it back again. I had to search for them as the astronomer searches for a star. It may be that in the spring, when the atmosphere is less clear and the heart of the bird full of a more mad and reckless love, that the climax is not reached until the eye loses sight of the singer.

Several attempts have been made to introduce the lark into this country, but for some reason or other the experiment has never succeeded. The birds have been liberated in Virginia and on Long Island, but do not seem ever to have been heard of afterwards. I see no reason why they should not thrive anywhere along our Atlantic seaboard, and I think the question of introducing them worthy of more thorough and serious attention than has yet been given it, for the lark is really an institution; and as he sings long after the other birds are silent, — as if he had perpetual spring in his heart, — he would be

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a great acquisition to our fields and meadows. It may be that he cannot stand the extremes of our climate, though the English sparrow thrives well enough. The Smithsonian Institution has received specimens of the skylark from Alaska, where, no doubt, they find a climate more like the English.

They have another prominent singer in England, namely, the robin, — the original robin redbreast, — a slight, quick, active bird with an orange front and an olive back, and a bright, musical warble that I caught by every garden, lane, and hedge-row. It suggests our bluebird, and has similar habits and manners, though it is a much better musician.

The European bird that corresponds to our robin is the blackbird, of which Tennyson sings: —

“O Blackbird, sing me something well;
While all the neighbors shoot thee round
I keep smooth plats of fruitful ground
Where thou may'st warble, eat, and dwell.”

It quite startled me to see such a resemblance, — to see, indeed, a black robin. In size, form, flight, manners, note, call, there is hardly an appreciable difference. The bird starts up with the same flirt of the wings, and calls out in the same jocund, salutatory way, as he hastens off. The nest, of coarse mortar in the fork of a tree, or in an outbuilding, or in the side of a wall, is also the same.

The bird I wished most to hear, namely, the

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nightingale, had already departed on its southern journey. I saw one in the Zoölogical Gardens in London, and took a good look at him. He struck me as bearing a close resemblance to our hermit thrush, with something in his manners that suggested the water-thrush also. Carlyle said he first recognized its song from the description of it in "Wilhelm Meister," and that it was a "sudden burst," which is like the song of our water-thrush.

I have little doubt our songsters excel in melody, while the European birds excel in profuseness and volubility. I heard many bright, animated notes and many harsh ones, but few that were melodious. This fact did not harmonize with the general drift of the rest of my observations, for one of the first things that strikes an American in Europe is the mellowness and rich tone of things. The European is softer-voiced than the American and milder-mannered, but the bird voices seem an exception to this rule.

PARKS

While in London I had much pleasure in strolling through the great parks, Hyde Park, Regent's Park, St. James Park, Victoria Park, and in making Sunday excursions to Richmond Park, Hampden Court Parks, and the great parks at Windsor Castle. The magnitude of all these parks was something I was entirely unprepared for, and their free-

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dom also; one could roam where he pleased. Not once did I see a signboard, "Keep off the grass," or go here or go there. There was grass enough, and one could launch out in every direction without fear of trespassing on forbidden ground. One gets used, at least I do, to such petty parks at home, and walks amid them so cautiously and circumspectly, every shrub and tree and grass plat saying "Hands off," that it is a new sensation to enter a city pleasure ground like Hyde Park, — a vast natural landscape, nearly two miles long and a mile wide, with broad, rolling plains, with herds of sheep grazing, and forests and lakes, and all as free as the air. We have some quite sizable parks and reservations in Washington, and the citizen has the right of way over their tortuous gravel walks, but he puts his foot upon the grass at the risk of being insolently hailed by the local police. I have even been called to order for reclining upon a seat under a tree in the Smithsonian grounds. I must sit upright as in church. But in Hyde Park or Regent's Park I could not only walk upon the grass, but lie upon it, or roll upon it, or play "one catch all" with children, boys, dogs, or sheep upon it; and I took my revenge for once for being so long confined to gravel walks, and gave the grass an opportunity to grow under my foot whenever I entered one of these parks.

This free-and-easy rural character of the London

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parks is quite in keeping with the tone and atmosphere of the great metropolis itself, which in so many respects has a country homeliness and sincerity, and shows the essentially bucolic taste of the people ; contrasting in this respect with the parks and gardens of Paris, which show as unmistakably the citizen and the taste for art and the beauty of design and ornamentation. Hyde Park seems to me the perfection of a city pleasure ground of this kind, because it is so free and so thoroughly a piece of the country, and so exempt from any petty artistic displays.

In walking over Richmond Park I found I had quite a day's work before me, as it was like traversing a township ; while the great park at Windsor Castle, being upwards of fifty miles around, might well make the boldest pedestrian hesitate. My first excursion was to Hampton Court, an old royal residence, where I spent a delicious October day wandering through Bushy Park, and looking with covetous, though admiring eyes upon the vast herds of deer that dotted the plains, or gave way before me as I entered the woods. There seemed literally to be many thousands of these beautiful animals in this park, and the loud, hankering sounds of the bucks, as they pursued or circled around the does, was a new sound to my ears. The rabbits and pheasants also were objects of the liveliest interest to me, and I found that after all a good shot at

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them with the eye, especially when I could credit myself with alertness or stealthiness, was satisfaction enough.

I thought it worthy of note that, though these great parks in and about London were so free, and apparently without any police regulations whatever, yet I never saw prowling about them any of those vicious, ruffianly looking characters that generally infest the neighborhood of our great cities, especially of a Sunday. There were troops of boys, but they were astonishingly quiet and innoxious, very unlike American boys, white or black, a band of whom making excursions into the country are always a band of outlaws. Ruffianism with us is no doubt much more brazen and pronounced, not merely because the law is lax, but because such is the genius of the people.

II

ENGLISH CHARACTERISTICS

ENGLAND is a mellow country, and the English people are a mellow people. They have hung on the tree of nations a long time, and will, no doubt, hang as much longer; for windfalls, I reckon, are not the order in this island. We are pitched several degrees higher in this country. By contrast, things here are loud, sharp, and garish. Our geography is loud; the manners of the people are

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loud; our climate is loud, very loud, so dry and sharp, and full of violent changes and contrasts; and our goings-out and comings-in as a nation are anything but silent. Do we not occasionally give the door an extra slam just for effect?

In England everything is on a lower key, slower, steadier, gentler. Life is, no doubt, as full, or fuller, in its material forms and measures, but less violent and aggressive. The buffers the English have between their cars to break the shock are typical of much one sees there.

All sounds are softer in England; the surface of things is less hard. The eye of day and the face of Nature are less bright. Everything has a mellow, subdued cast. There is no abruptness in the landscape, no sharp and violent contrasts, no brilliant and striking tints in the foliage. A soft, pale yellow is all one sees in the way of tints along the borders of the autumn woods. English apples (very small and inferior, by the way) are not so highly colored as ours. The blackberries, just ripening in October, are less pungent and acid; and the garden vegetables, such as cabbage, celery, cauliflower, beet, and other root crops, are less rank and fibrous; and I am very sure that the meats also are tenderer and sweeter. There can be no doubt about the superiority of English mutton; and the tender and succulent grass, and the moist and agreeable climate, must tell upon the beef also.

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English coal is all soft coal, and the stone is soft stone. The foundations of the hills are chalk instead of granite. The stone with which most of the old churches and cathedrals are built would not endure in our climate half a century; but in Britain the tooth of Time is much blunter, and the hunger of the old man less ravenous, and the ancient architecture stands half a millennium, or until it is slowly worn away by the gentle attrition of the wind and rain.

At Chester, the old Roman wall that surrounds the town, built in the first century and repaired in the ninth, is still standing without a break or a swerve, though in some places the outer face of the wall is worn through. The Cathedral, and St. John's Church, in the same town, present to the beholder outlines as jagged and broken as rocks and cliffs; and yet it is only chip by chip, or grain by grain, that ruin approaches. The timber also lasts an incredibly long time. Beneath one of the arched ways, in the Chester wall above referred to, I saw timbers that must have been in place five or six hundred years. The beams in the old houses, also fully exposed to the weather, seem incapable of decay; those dating from Shakespeare's time being apparently as firm as ever.

I noticed that the characteristic aspect of the clouds in England was different from ours, — soft, fleecy, vapory, indistinguishable, — never the firm,

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compact, sharply defined, deeply dyed masses and fragments so common in our own sky. It rains easily but slowly. The average rainfall of London is less than that of New York, and yet it doubtless rains ten days in the former to one in the latter. Storms accompanied with thunder are rare ; while the crashing, wrenching, explosive thunder-gusts so common with us, deluging the earth and convulsing the heavens, are seldom known.

In keeping with this elemental control and moderation, I found the character and manners of the people gentler and sweeter than I had been led to believe they were. No loudness, brazenness, impertinence ; no oaths, no swaggering, no leering at women, no irreverence, no flippancy, no bullying, no insolence of porters or clerks or conductors, no importunity of bootblacks or newsboys, no omnivorousness of hackmen, — at least, comparatively none, — all of which an American is apt to notice, and, I hope, appreciate. In London the bootblack salutes you with a respectful bow and touches his cap, and would no more think of pursuing you or answering your refusal than he would of jumping into the Thames. The same is true of the newsboys. If they were to scream and bellow in London as they do in New York or Washington, they would be suppressed by the police, as they ought to be. The vender of papers stands at the corner of the street, with his goods in his arms, and a large

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placard spread out at his feet, giving in big letters the principal news-headings.

Street-cries of all kinds are less noticeable, less aggressive, than in this country, and the manners of the shopmen make you feel you are conferring a benefit instead of receiving one. Even their locomotives are less noisy than ours, having a shrill, infantile whistle that contrasts strongly with the loud, demoniac yell that makes a residence near a railway or a depot, in this country, so unbearable. The trains themselves move with wonderful smoothness and celerity, making a mere fraction of the racket made by our flying palaces as they go swaying and jolting over our hasty, ill-ballasted roads.

It is characteristic of the English prudence and plain dealing, that they put so little on the cars and so much on the road, while the reverse process is equally characteristic of American enterprise. Our railway system no doubt has certain advantages, or rather conveniences, over the English, but, for my part, I had rather ride smoothly, swiftly, and safely in a luggage van than be jerked and jolted to destruction in the velvet and veneering of our palace cars. Upholster the road first, and let us ride on bare boards until a cushion can be afforded; not till after the bridges are of granite and iron, and the rails of steel, do we want this more than aristocratic splendor and luxury of palace and drawing-room cars. To me there is no more marked sign of

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the essential vulgarity of the national manners than these princely cars and beggarly, clap-trap roads. It is like a man wearing a ruffled and jeweled shirt-front, but too poor to afford a shirt itself.

I have said the English are a sweet and mellow people. There is, indeed, a charm about these ancestral races that goes to the heart. And herein was one of the profoundest surprises of my visit, namely, that, in coming from the New World to the Old, from a people the most recently out of the woods of any, to one of the ripest and venerablest of the European nationalities, I should find a race more simple, youthful, and less sophisticated than the one I had left behind me. Yet this was my impression. We have lost immensely in some things, and what we have gained is not yet so obvious or so definable. We have lost in reverence, in homeliness, in heart and conscience, — in virtue, using the word in its proper sense. To some, the difference which I note may appear a difference in favor of the great cuteness, wideawakeness, and enterprise of the American, but it is simply a difference expressive of our greater forwardness. We are a forward people, and the god we worship is Smartness. In one of the worst tendencies of the age, namely, an impudent, superficial, journalistic intellectuality and glibness, America, in her polite and literary circles, no doubt leads all other nations. English books and newspapers show more homely

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veracity, more singleness of purpose, in short more *character*, than ours. The great charm of such a man as Darwin, for instance, is his simple manliness and transparent good faith, and the absence in him of that finical, self-complacent smartness which is the bane of our literature.

The poet Clough thought the New England man more simple than the man of Old England. Hawthorne, on the other hand, seemed reluctant to admit that the English were a "franker and simpler people, from peer to peasant," than we are ; and that they had not yet wandered so far from that "healthful and primitive simplicity in which man was created" as have their descendants in America. My own impression accords with Hawthorne's. We are a more alert and curious people, but not so simple, — not so easily angered, nor so easily amused. We have partaken more largely of the fruit of the forbidden tree. The English have more of the stay-at-home virtues, which, on the other hand, they no doubt pay pretty well for by their more insular tendencies.

The youths and maidens seemed more simple, with their softer and less intellectual faces. When I returned from Paris, the only person in the second-class compartment of the car with me, for a long distance, was an English youth eighteen or twenty years old, returning home to London after an absence of nearly a year, which he had spent as waiter

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in a Parisian hotel. He was born in London and had spent nearly his whole life there, where his mother, a widow, then lived. He talked very freely with me, and told me his troubles, and plans, and hopes, as if we had long known each other. What especially struck me in the youth was a kind of sweetness and innocence — perhaps what some would call “greenness” — that at home I had associated only with country boys, and not even with them latterly. The smartness and knowingness and a certain hardness or keenness of our city youths, — there was no trace of it at all in this young Cockney. But he liked American travelers better than those from his own country. They were more friendly and communicative, — were not so afraid to speak to “a fellow,” and at the hotel were more easily pleased.

The American is certainly not the grumbler the Englishman is; he is more cosmopolitan and conciliatory. The Englishman will not adapt himself to his surroundings; he is not the least bit an imitative animal; he will be nothing but an Englishman, and is out of place — an anomaly — in any country but his own. To understand him, you must see him at home in the British island where he grew, where he belongs, where he has expressed himself and justified himself, and where his interior, unconscious characteristics are revealed. There he is quite a different creature from what he is abroad. There he is “sweet,” but he sours the moment he steps off the

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island. In this country he is too generally arrogant, fault-finding, and supercilious. The very traits of loudness, sharpness, and unleavenedness, which I complain of in our national manners, he very frequently exemplifies in an exaggerated form.

The Scotch or German element no doubt fuses and mixes with ours much more readily than the purely British.

The traveler feels the past in England as of course he cannot feel it here; and, along with impressions of the present, one gets the flavor and influence of earlier, simpler times, which, no doubt, is a potent charm, and one source of the "rose-color" which some readers have found in my sketches, as the absence of it is one cause of the raw, acrid, unlovely character of much that there is in this country. If the English are the old wine, we are the new. We are not yet thoroughly leavened as a people, nor have we more than begun to transmute and humanize our surroundings; and as the digestive and assimilative powers of the American are clearly less than those of the Englishman, to say nothing of our harsher, more violent climate, I have no idea that ours can ever become the mellow land that Britain is.

As for the charge of brutality that is often brought against the English, and which is so successfully depicted by Dickens and Thackeray, there is doubtless good ground for it, though I actually saw very

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little of it during five weeks' residence in London, and I poked about into all the dens and corners I could find, and perambulated the streets at nearly all hours of the night and day. Yet I am persuaded there is a kind of brutality among the lower orders in England that does not exist in the same measure in this country, — an ignorant animal coarseness, an insensibility, which gives rise to wife-beating and kindred offenses. But the brutality of ignorance and stolidity is not the worst form of the evil. It is good material to make something better of. It is an excess and not a perversion. It is not man fallen, but man undeveloped. Beware, rather, that refined, subsidized brutality; that thin, depleted, moral consciousness; or that contemptuous, cankerous, euphemistic brutality, of which, I believe, we can show vastly more samples than Great Britain. Indeed, I believe, for the most part, that the brutality of the English people is only the excess and plethora of that healthful, muscular robustness and full-bloodedness for which the nation has always been famous, and which it should prize beyond almost anything else. But for our brutality, our recklessness of life and property, the brazen ruffianism in our great cities, the hellish greed and robbery and plunder in high places, I should have to look a long time to find so plausible an excuse.

[But I notice with pleasure that English travelers are beginning to find more to admire than to con-

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demon in this country, and that they accredit us with some virtues they do not find at home in the same measure. They are charmed with the independence, the self-respect, the good-nature, and the obliging dispositions shown by the mass of our people; while American travelers seem to be more and more ready to acknowledge the charm and the substantial qualities of the mother country. It is a good omen. One principal source of the pleasure which each takes in the other is no doubt to be found in the novelty of the impressions. It is like a change of cookery. The flavor of the dish is fresh and uncloying to each. The English probably tire of their own snobbishness and flunkeyism, and we of our own smartness and puppyism. After the American has got done bragging about his independence, and his "free and equal" prerogatives, he begins to see how these things run into impertinence and forwardness; and the Englishman, in visiting us, escapes from his social bonds and prejudices, to see for a moment how absurd they all are.]

A London crowd I thought the most normal and unsophisticated I had ever seen, with the least admixture of rowdyism and ruffianism. No doubt it is there, but this scum is not upon the surface, as with us. I went about very freely in the hundred and one places of amusement where the average working classes assemble, with their wives and

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daughters and sweethearts, and smoke villainous cigars and drink ale and stout. There was to me something notably fresh and canny about them, as if they had only yesterday ceased to be shepherds and shepherdesses. They certainly were less developed in certain directions, or shall I say less depraved, than similar crowds in our great cities. They are easily pleased, and laugh at the simple and childlike, but there is little that hints of an impure taste, or of abnormal appetites. I often smiled at the tameness and simplicity of the amusements, but my sense of fitness, or proportion, or decency was never once outraged. They always stop short of a certain point, — the point where wit degenerates into mockery, and liberty into license: nature is never put to shame, and will commonly bear much more. Especially to the American sense did their humorous and comic strokes, their negro-minstrelsy and attempts at Yankee comedy, seem in a minor key. There was not enough irreverence and slang and coarse ribaldry, in the whole evening's entertainment, to have seasoned one line of some of our most popular comic poetry. But the music, and the gymnastic, acrobatic, and other feats, were of a very high order. And I will say here that the characteristic flavor of the humor and fun-making of the average English people, as it impressed my sense, is what one gets in *Sterne*, — very human and stomachic, and entirely free from the contempt and superciliousness of most

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current writers. I did not get one whiff of Dickens anywhere. No doubt it is there in some form or other, but it is not patent, or even appreciable, to the sense of such an observer as I am.

I was not less pleased by the simple good-will and *bonhomie* that pervaded the crowd. There is in all these gatherings an indiscriminate mingling of the sexes, a mingling without jar or noise or rudeness of any kind, and marked by a mutual respect on all sides that is novel and refreshing. Indeed, so uniform is the courtesy, and so human and considerate the interest, that I was often at a loss to discriminate the wife or the sister from the mistress or the acquaintance of the hour, and had many times to check my American curiosity and cold, criticising stare. For it was curious to see young men and women from the lowest social strata meet and mingle in a public hall without lewdness or badinage, but even with gentleness and consideration. The truth is, however, that the class of women known as victims of the social evil do not sink within many degrees as low in Europe as they do in this country, either in their own opinion or in that of the public; and there can be but little doubt that gatherings of the kind referred to, if permitted in our great cities, would be tenfold more scandalous and disgraceful than they are in London or Paris. There is something so reckless and desperate in the career of man or woman in this

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country, when they begin to go down, that the only feeling they too often excite is one of loathsomeness and disgust. The lowest depth must be reached, and it is reached quickly. But in London the same characters seem to keep a sweet side from corruption to the last, and you will see good manners everywhere.

We boast of our deference to woman, but if the Old World made her a tool, we are fast making her a toy; and the latter is the more hopeless condition. But among the better classes in England I am convinced that woman is regarded more as a sister and an equal than in this country, and is less subject to insult, and to leering, brutal comment, there than here. We are her slave or her tyrant; so seldom her brother and friend. I thought it a significant fact that I found no place of amusement set apart for the men; where one sex went the other went; what was sauce for the gander was sauce for the goose; and the spirit that prevailed was soft and human accordingly. The hotels had no "ladies' entrance," but all passed in and out the same door, and met and mingled commonly in the same room, and the place was as much for one as for the other. It was no more a masculine monopoly than it was a feminine. Indeed, in the country towns and villages the character of the inns is unmistakably given by woman; hence the sweet, domestic atmosphere that pervades and fills them is balm to the spirit.

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Even the larger hotels of Liverpool and London have a private, cozy, home character that is most delightful. On entering them, instead of finding yourself in a sort of public thoroughfare or political caucus, amid crowds of men talking and smoking and spitting, with stalls on either side where cigars and tobacco and books and papers are sold, you perceive you are in something like a larger hall of a private house, with perhaps a parlor and coffee-room on one side, and the office, and smoking-room, and stairway on the other. You may leave your coat and hat on the rack in the hall, and stand your umbrella there also, with full assurance that you will find them there when you want them, if it be the next morning or the next week. Instead of that petty tyrant the hotel clerk, a young woman sits in the office with her sewing or other needlework, and quietly receives you. She gives you your number on a card, rings for a chambermaid to show you to your room, and directs your luggage to be sent up; and there is something in the look of things, and the way they are done, that goes to the right spot at once.

At the hotel in London where I stayed, the daughters of the landlord, three fresh, comely young women, did the duties of the office; and their presence, so quiet and domestic, gave the prevailing hue and tone to the whole house. I wonder how long a young woman could preserve her self-respect and

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sensibility in such a position in New York or Washington?

The English regard us as a wonderfully patient people, and there can be no doubt that we put up with abuses unknown elsewhere. If we have no big tyrant, we have ten thousand little ones, who tread upon our toes at every turn. The tyranny of corporations, and of public servants of one kind and another, as the ticket-man, the railroad conductor, or even of the country stage-driver, seem to be features peculiar to American democracy. In England the traveler is never snubbed, or made to feel that it is by somebody's sufferance that he is allowed aboard or to pass on his way.

If you get into an omnibus or a railroad or tramway carriage in London, you are sure of a seat. Not another person can get aboard after the seats are all full. Or, if you enter a public hall, you know you will not be required to stand up unless you pay the standing-up price. There is everywhere that system, and order, and fair dealing, which all men love. The science of living has been reduced to a fine point. You pay a sixpence and get a sixpence worth of whatever you buy. There are all grades and prices, and the robbery and extortion so current at home appear to be unknown.

I am not contending for the superiority of everything English, but would not disguise from myself or my readers the fact of the greater humanity and

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consideration that prevail in the mother country. Things here are yet in the green, but I trust there is no good reason to doubt that our fruit will mellow and ripen in time like the rest.

III

A GLIMPSE OF FRANCE

IN coming over to France, I noticed that the chalk-hills, which were stopped so abruptly by the sea on the British side of the Channel, began again on the French side, only they had lost their smooth, pastoral character, and were more broken and rocky, and that they continued all the way to Paris, walling in the Seine, and giving the prevailing tone and hue to the country, — scrape away the green and brown epidermis of the hills anywhere, and out shines their white framework, — and that Paris itself was built of stone evidently quarried from this formation, — a light, cream-colored stone, so soft that rifle-bullets bury themselves in it nearly their own depth, thus pitting some of the more exposed fronts during the recent strife in a very noticeable manner, and which, in building, is put up in the rough, all the carving, sculpturing, and finishing being done after the blocks are in position in the wall.

Disregarding the counsel of friends, I braved the Channel at one of its wider points, taking the vixen

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by the waist instead of by the neck, and found her as placid as a lake, as I did also on my return a week later.

It was a bright October morning as we steamed into the little harbor at Dieppe, and the first scene that met my eye was, I suppose, a characteristic one, — four or five old men and women towing a vessel into a dock. They bent beneath the rope that passed from shoulder to shoulder, and tugged away doggedly at it, the women apparently more than able to do their part. There is no equalizer of the sexes like poverty and misery, and then it very often happens that the gray mare proves the better horse. Throughout the agricultural regions, as we passed along, the men apparently all wore petticoats; at least, the petticoats were the most active and prominent in the field occupations. Their wearers were digging potatoes, pulling beets, following the harrow (in one instance a thorn-bush drawn by a cow), and stirring the wet, new-mown grass. I believe the pantaloons were doing the mowing. But I looked in vain for any Maud Mullers in the meadows, and have concluded that these can be found only in New England hay-fields! And herein is one of the first surprises that await one on visiting the Old World countries, — the absence of graceful, girlish figures, and bright girlish faces, among the peasantry or rural population. In France I certainly expected to see female beauty everywhere, but did

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not get one gleam all that sunny day till I got to Paris. Is it a plant that flourishes only in cities on this side of the Atlantic, or do all the pretty girls, as soon as they are grown, pack their trunks, and leave for the gay metropolis?

At Dieppe I first saw the wooden shoe, and heard its dry, senseless clatter upon the pavement. How suggestive of the cramped and inflexible conditions with which human nature has borne so long in these lands!

A small paved square near the wharf was the scene of an early market, and afforded my first glimpse of the neatness and good taste that characterize nearly everything in France. Twenty or thirty peasant women, coarse and masculine, but very tidy, with their snow-white caps and short petticoats, and perhaps half as many men, were chattering and chaffering over little heaps of fresh country produce. The onions and potatoes and cauliflowers were prettily arranged on the clean pavement, or on white linen cloths, and the scene was altogether animated and agreeable.

La belle France is the woman's country clearly, and it seems a mistake or an anomaly that woman is not at the top and leading in all departments, compelling the other sex to play second fiddle, as she so frequently has done for a brief time in isolated cases in the past; not that the man is effeminate, but that the woman seems so nearly his match

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and equal, and so often proves even his superior. In no other nation, during times of popular excitement and insurrection or revolution, do women emerge so conspicuously, often in the front ranks, the most furious and ungovernable of any. I think even a female conscription might be advisable in the present condition of France, if I may judge of her soldiers from the specimens I saw. Small, spiritless, inferior-looking men, all of them. They were like Number Three mackerel or the last run of shad, as doubtless they were, — the last pickings and resiftings of the population.

I don't know how far it may be a national custom, but I observed that the women of the humbler classes, in meeting or parting with friends at the stations, saluted each other on both cheeks, never upon the mouth, as our dear creatures do, and I commended their good taste, though I certainly approve the American custom, too.

Among the male population I was struck with the frequent recurrence of the Louis Napoleon type of face. "Has this man," I said, "succeeded in impressing himself even upon the physiognomy of the people? Has he taken such a hold of their imaginations that they have grown to look like him?" The guard that took our train down to Paris might easily play the double to the ex-emperor; and many times in Paris and among different classes I saw the same countenance.

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Coming from England, the traveling seems very slow in this part of France, taking eight or nine hours to go from Dieppe to Paris, with an hour's delay at Rouen. The valley of the Seine, which the road follows or skirts more than half the way, is very winding, with immense flats or plains shut in by a wall of steep, uniform hills, and, in the progress of the journey, is from time to time laid open to the traveler in a way that is full of novelty and surprise. The day was bright and lovely, and I found my eyes running riot the same as they had done during my first ride on British soil. The contrast between the two countries is quite marked, France in this region being much more broken and picturesque, with some waste or sterile land, — a thing I did not see at all in England. Had I awaked from a long sleep just before reaching Paris, I should have guessed I was riding through Maryland, and should soon see the dome of the Capitol at Washington rising above the trees. So much wild and bushy or barren and half-cultivated land, almost under the walls of the French capital, was a surprise.

Then there are few or none of those immense home-parks which one sees in England, the land being mostly held by a great number of small proprietors, and cultivated in strips, or long, narrow parallelograms, making the landscape look like many-colored patchwork. Everywhere along the

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Seine, stretching over the flats, or tilted up against the sides of the hills, in some places seeming almost to stand on end, were these acre or half-acre rectangular farms, without any dividing lines or fences, and of a great variety of shades and colors, according to the crop and the tillage.

I was glad to see my old friend, the beech-tree, all along the route. His bole wore the same gray and patched appearance it does at home, and no doubt Thoreau would have found his instep even fairer; for the beech on this side of the Atlantic is a more fluent and graceful tree than the American species, resembling, in its branchings and general form, our elm, though never developing such an immense green dome as our elm when standing alone, and I saw no European tree that does. The European elm is not unlike our beech in form and outline.

Going from London to Paris is, in some respects, like getting out of the chimney on to the housetop, — the latter city is, by contrast, so light and airy, and so American in its roominess. I had come to Paris for my dessert after my feast of London joints, and I suspect I was a little dainty in that most dainty of cities. In fact, I had become quite sated with sight-seeing, and the prospect of having to go on and “do” the rest of Europe after the usual manner of tourists, and as my companions did, would have been quite appalling. Said companions steered off like a pack of foxhounds in full blast. The

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game they were in quest of led them a wild chase up the Rhine, off through Germany and Italy, taking a turn back through Switzerland, giving them no rest, and apparently eluding them at last. I had felt obliged to cut loose from them at the outset, my capacity to digest kingdoms and empires at short notice being far below that of the average of my countrymen. My interest and delight had been too intense at the outset; I had partaken too heartily of the first courses; and now, where other travelers begin to warm to the subject, and to have the keenest relish, I began to wish the whole thing well through with. So that Paris was no paradise to one American at least. Yet the mere change of air and sky, and the escape from that sooty, all-pervasive, chimney-flue smell of London, was so sudden and complete, that the first hour of Paris was like a refreshing bath, and gave rise to satisfaction in which every pore of the skin participated. My room at the hotel was a gem of neatness and order, and the bed a marvel of art, comfort, and ease, three feet deep at least.

Then the uniform imperial grace and *éclat* of the city was a new experience. Here was the city of cities, the capital of taste and fashion, the pride and flower of a great race and a great history, the city of kings and emperors, and of a people which, after all, loves kings and emperors, and will not long, I fear, be happy without them, — a gregarious, ur-

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bane people, a people of genius and destiny, whose God is Art and whose devil is Communism. London has long ago outgrown itself, has spread, and multiplied, and accumulated, without a corresponding inward expansion and unification; but in Paris they have pulled down and built larger, and the spirit of centralization has had full play. Hence the French capital is superb, but soon grows monotonous. See one street and boulevard, and you have seen it all. It has the unity and consecutiveness of a thing deliberately planned and built to order, from beginning to end. Its stone is all from one quarry, and its designs are all the work of one architect. London has infinite variety, and quaintness, and picturesqueness, and is of all possible shades of dinginess and weather-stains. It shows its age, shows the work of innumerable generations, and is more an aggregation, a conglomeration, than is Paris. Paris shows the citizen, and is modern and democratic in its uniformity. On the whole, I liked London best, because I am so much of a countryman, I suppose, and affect so little the metropolitan spirit. In London there are a few grand things to be seen, and the pulse of the great city itself is like the throb of the ocean; but in Paris, owing either to my jaded senses or to some other cause, I saw nothing that was grand, but enough that was beautiful and pleasing. The more pretentious and elaborate specimens of architecture, like the Palace of the

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Tuileries or the Palais Royal, are truly superb, but they as truly do not touch that deeper chord whose awakening we call the emotion of the sublime.

But the fitness and good taste everywhere displayed in the French capital may well offset any considerations of this kind, and cannot fail to be refreshing to a traveler of any other land, — in the dress and manners of the people, in the shops and bazaars and show-windows, in the markets, the equipages, the furniture, the hotels. It is entirely a new sensation to an American to look into a Parisian theatre, and see the acting and hear the music. The chances are that, for the first time, he sees the interior of a theatre that does not have a hard, business-like, matter-of-fact air. The auditors look comfortable and cozy, and quite at home, and do not, shoulder to shoulder and in solid lines, make a dead set at the play and the music. The theatre has warm hangings, warm colors, cozy boxes and stalls, and is in no sense the public, away-from-home place we are so familiar with in this country. Again, one might know it was Paris by the character of the prints and pictures in the shop windows; they are so clever as art that one becomes reprehensibly indifferent to their license. Whatever sins the French may be guilty of, they never sin against art and good taste (except when in the frenzy of revolution), and, if Propriety is sometimes obliged to cry out "For shame!" in the French capital, she

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must do so with ill-concealed admiration, like a fond mother chiding with word and gesture while she approves with tone and look. It is a foolish charge, often made, that the French make vice attractive: they make it provocative of laughter; the spark of wit is always evolved, and what is a better antidote to this kind of poison than mirth?

They carry their wit even into their *cuisine*. Every dish set before you at the table is a picture, and tickles your eye before it does your palate. When I ordered fried eggs, they were brought on a snow-white napkin, which was artistically folded upon a piece of ornamented tissue-paper that covered a china plate; if I asked for cold ham, it came in flakes, arrayed like great rose-leaves, with a green sprig or two of parsley dropped upon it, and surrounded by a border of calfs'-foot jelly, like a setting of crystals. The bread revealed new qualities in the wheat, it was so sweet and nutty; and the fried potatoes, with which your beefsteak comes snowed under, are the very flower of the culinary art, and I believe impossible in any other country.

Even the ruins are in excellent taste, and are by far the best-behaved ruins I ever saw for so recent ones. I came near passing some of the most noted, during my first walk, without observing them. The main walls were all standing, and the fronts were as imposing as ever. No litter or rubbish, no charred timbers or blackened walls; only vacant windows

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and wrecked interiors, which do not very much mar the general outside effect.

My first genuine surprise was the morning after my arrival, which, according to my reckoning, was Sunday; and when I heard the usual week-day sounds, and, sallying forth, saw the usual week-day occupations going on, — painters painting, glaziers glazing, masons on their scaffolds, and heavy drays and market-wagons going through the streets, and many shops and bazaars open, — I must have presented to a scrutinizing beholder the air and manner of a man in a dream, so absorbed was I in running over the events of the week to find where the mistake had occurred, where I had failed to turn a leaf, or else had turned over two leaves for one. But each day had a distinct record, and every count resulted the same. It must be Sunday. Then it all dawned upon me that this was Paris, and that the Parisians did not have the reputation of being very strict Sabbatarians.

The French give a touch of art to whatever they do. Even the drivers of drays and carts and trucks about the streets are not content with a plain, matter-of-fact whip, as an English or American laborer would be, but it must be a finely modeled stalk, with a long, tapering lash tipped with the best silksnapper. Always the inevitable snapper. I doubt if there is a whip in Paris without a snapper. Here is where the fine art, the rhetoric of driving, comes

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in. This converts a vulgar, prosy "gad" into a delicate instrument, to be wielded with pride and skill, and never literally to be applied to the backs of the animals, but to be launched to right and left into the air with a professional flourish, and a sharp, ringing report. Crack! crack! crack! all day long go these ten thousand whips, like the boys' Fourth of July fusillade. It was invariably the first sound I heard when I opened my eyes in the morning, and generally the last one at night. Occasionally some belated drayman would come hurrying along just as I was going to sleep, or some early bird before I was fully awake in the morning, and let off in rapid succession, in front of my hotel, a volley from the tip of his lash that would make the street echo again, and that might well have been the envy of any ring-master that ever trod the tan-bark. Now and then, during my ramblings, I would suddenly hear some master-whip, perhaps that of an old omnibus-driver, that would crack like a rifle, and, as it passed along, all the lesser whips, all the amateur snappers, would strike up with a jealous and envious emulation, making every foot-passenger wink, and one (myself) at least almost to shade his eyes from the imaginary missiles.

I record this fact because it "points a moral and adorns a 'tail.'" The French always give this extra touch. Everything has its silk snapper. Are not the literary whips of Paris famous for their rhetori-

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cal tips and the sting there is in them? What French writer ever goaded his adversary with the belly of his lash, like the Germans and the English, when he could blister him with its silken end, and the percussion of wit be heard at every stroke?

In the shops, and windows, and public halls, this passion takes the form of mirrors, — mirrors, mirrors everywhere, on the walls, in the panels, in the cases, on the pillars, extending, multiplying, opening up vistas this way and that, and converting the smallest shop, with a solitary girl and a solitary customer, into an immense enchanted bazaar, across whose endless counters customers lean and pretty girls display goods. The French are always before the looking-glass, even when they eat and drink. I never went into a restaurant without seeing four or five facsimiles of myself approaching from as many different directions, giving the order to the waiter and sitting down at the table. Hence I always had plenty of company at dinner, though we were none of us very social, and I was the only one who entered or passed out at the door. The show windows are the greatest cheat. What an expanse, how crowded, and how brilliant! You see, for instance, an immense array of jewelry, and pause to have a look. You begin at the end nearest you, and, after gazing a moment, take a step to run your eye along the dazzling display. when, presto! the trays of watches and diamonds vanish

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in a twinkling, and you find yourself looking into the door, or your delighted eyes suddenly bring up against a brick wall, disenchanted so quickly that you almost stagger.

I went into a popular music and dancing hall one night, and found myself in a perfect enchantment of mirrors. Not an inch of wall was anywhere visible. I was suddenly caught up into the seventh heaven of looking-glasses, from which I came down with a shock the moment I emerged into the street again. I observed that this mirror contagion had broken out in spots in London, and, in the narrow and crowded condition of the shops there, even this illusory enlargement would be a relief. It might not improve the air, or add to the available storage capacity of the establishment, but it would certainly give a wider range to the eye.

The American no sooner sets foot on the soil of France than he perceives he has entered a nation of drinkers as he has left a nation of eaters. Men do not live by bread here, but by wine. Drink, drink, drink everywhere, — along all the boulevards, and streets, and quays, and byways; in the restaurants and under awnings, and seated on the open sidewalk; social and convivial wine-bibbing, — not hastily and in large quantities, but leisurely and reposingly, and with much conversation and enjoyment.

Drink, drink, drink, and, with equal frequency

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and nearly as much openness, the reverse or diuretic side of the fact. (How our self-consciousness would writhe! We should all turn to stone!) Indeed, the ceaseless deglutition of mankind in this part of the world is equaled only by the answering and enormous activity of the human male kidneys. This latter was too astonishing and too public a fact to go unmentioned. At Dieppe, by the reeking tubs standing about, I suspected some local distemper; but when I got to Paris, and saw how fully and openly the wants of the male citizen in this respect were recognized by the sanitary and municipal regulations, and that the urinals were thicker than the lamp-posts, I concluded it must be a national trait, and at once abandoned the theory that had begun to take possession of my mind, namely, that diabetes was no doubt the cause of the decadence of France. Yet I suspect it is no more a peculiarity of French manners than of European manners generally, and in its light I relished immensely the history of a well-known statue which stands in a public square in one of the German cities. The statue commemorates the unblushing audacity of a peasant going to market with a goose under each arm, who ignored even the presence of the king, and it is at certain times dressed up and made the centre of holiday festivities. It is a public fountain, and its living streams of water make it one of the most appropriate and suggestive monuments in Europe. I would only

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suggest that they canonize the Little Man, and that the Parisians recognize a tutelar deity in the goddess Urea, who should have an appropriate monument somewhere in the Place de la Concorde!

One of the loveliest features of Paris is the Seine. I was never tired of walking along its course. Its granite embankments; its numberless superb bridges, throwing their graceful spans across it; its clear, limpid water; its paved bed; the women washing; the lively little boats; and the many noble buildings that look down upon it, — make it the most charming citizen-river I ever beheld. Rivers generally get badly soiled when they come to the city, like some other rural travelers; but the Seine is as pure as a meadow brook wherever I saw it, though I dare say it does not escape without some contamination. I believe it receives the sewerage discharges farther down, and is no doubt turbid and pitchy enough there, like its brother, the Thames, which comes into London with the sky and the clouds in its bosom, and leaves it reeking with filth and slime.

After I had tired of the city, I took a day to visit St. Cloud, and refresh myself by a glimpse of the imperial park there, and a little of Nature's privacy, if such could be had, which proved to be the case, for a more agreeable day I have rarely passed. The park, toward which I at once made my way, is an immense natural forest, sweeping up over gentle

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hills from the banks of the Seine, and brought into order and perspective by a system of carriage-ways and avenues, which radiate from numerous centres like the boulevards of Paris. At these centres were fountains and statues, with sunlight falling upon them; and, looking along the cool, dusky avenues, as they opened, this way and that, upon these marble tableaux, the effect was very striking, and was not at all marred to my eye by the neglect into which the place had evidently fallen. The woods were just mellowing into October; the large, shining horse-chestnuts dropped at my feet as I walked along; the jay screamed over the trees; and occasionally a red squirrel — larger and softer-looking than ours, not so sleek, nor so noisy and vivacious — skipped among the branches. Soldiers passed, here and there, to and from some encampment on the farther side of the park; and, hidden from view somewhere in the forest-glades, a band of buglers filled the woods with wild musical strains.

English royal parks and pleasure grounds are quite different. There the prevailing character is pastoral, — immense stretches of lawn, dotted with the royal oak, and alive with deer. But the Frenchman loves forests evidently, and nearly all his pleasure grounds about Paris are immense woods. The Bois de Boulogne, the forests of Vincennes, of St. Germain, of Bondy, and I don't know how many others, are near at hand, and are much prized.

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What the animus of this love may be is not so clear. It cannot be a love of solitude, for the French are characteristically a social and gregarious people. It cannot be the English poetical or Wordsworthian feeling for Nature, because French literature does not show this sense or this kind of perception. I am inclined to think the forest is congenial to their love of form and their sharp perceptions, but more especially to that kind of fear and wildness which they at times exhibit; for civilization has not quenched the primitive ardor and fierceness of the Frenchman yet, and it is to be hoped it never will. He is still more than half a wild man, and, if turned loose in the woods, I think would develop, in tooth and nail, and in all the savage, brute instincts, more rapidly than the men of any other race, except possibly the Slavic. Have not his descendants in this country — the Canadian French — turned and lived with the Indians, and taken to wild, savage customs with more relish and genius than have any other people? How hairy and vehement and pantomimic he is! How his eyes glance from under his heavy brows! His type among the animals is the wolf, and one readily recalls how largely the wolf figures in the traditions and legends and folklore of Continental Europe, and how closely his remains are associated with those of man in the bone-caves of the geologists. He has not stalked through their forests and fascinated their imaginations so

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long for nothing. The she-wolf suckled other founders beside those of Rome. Especially when I read of the adventures of Russian and Polish exiles in Siberia — men of aristocratic lineage wandering amid snow and arctic cold, sleeping on rocks or in hollow trees, and holding their own, empty-handed, against hunger and frost and their fiercer brute embodiments — do I recognize a hardihood and a ferity whose wet-nurse, ages back, may well have been this gray slut of the woods.

It is this fierce, untamable core that gives the point and the splendid audacity to French literature and art, — its vehemence and impatience of restraint. It is the salt of their speech, the nitre of their wit. When morbid, it gives that rabid and epileptic tendency which sometimes shows itself in Victor Hugo. In this great writer, however, it more frequently takes the form of an aboriginal fierceness and hunger that glares and bristles, and is insatiable and omnivorous.

And how many times has Paris, that boudoir of beauty and fashion, proved to be a wolf's lair, swarming with jaws athirst for human throats! — the lust for blood and the greed for plunder, sleeping, biding their time, never extinguished.

I do not condemn it. To the natural historian it is good. It is a return to first principles again after so much art, and culture, and lying, and *chauvinisme*, and shows these old civilizations in no

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danger of becoming effete yet. It is like the hell of fire beneath our feet, which the geologists tell us is the life of the globe. Were it not for it, who would not at times despair of the French character? As long as this fiery core remains, I shall believe France capable of recovering from any disaster to her arms. The "mortal ripening" of the nation is stayed.

The English and Germans, on the other hand, are saved by great breadth and heartiness, and a constitutional tendency to coarseness of fibre which art and civilization abate very little. What is to save us in this country, I wonder, who have not the French regnancy and fire, nor the Teutonic heartiness and *vis inertiae*, and who are already in danger of refining or attenuating into a high-heeled, short-jawed, genteel race, with more brains than stomach, and more address than character?

IV

FROM LONDON TO NEW YORK

I HAD imagined that the next best thing to seeing England would be to see Scotland; but, as this latter pleasure was denied me, certainly the next best thing was seeing Scotland's greatest son. Carlyle has been so constantly and perhaps justly represented as a stormy and wrathful person, brew-

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ing bitter denunciation for America and Americans, that I cannot forbear to mention the sweet and genial mood in which we found him, — a gentle and affectionate grandfather, with his delicious Scotch brogue and rich, melodious talk, overflowing with reminiscences of his earlier life, of Scott and Goethe and Edinburgh, and other men and places he had known. Learning that I was especially interested in birds, he discoursed of the lark and the nightingale and the mavis, framing his remarks about them in some episode of his personal experience, and investing their songs with the double charm of his description and his adventure.

“It is only geese who get plucked there,” said my companion after we had left, — a man who had known Carlyle intimately for many years; “silly persons who have no veneration for the great man, and come to convert him or to change his convictions upon subjects to which he has devoted a lifetime of profound thought and meditation. With such persons he has no patience.”

Carlyle had just returned from Scotland, where he had spent the summer. The Scotch hills and mountains, he said, had an ancient, mournful look, as if the weight of immeasurable time had settled down upon them. Their look was in Ossian, — his spirit reflected theirs; and as I gazed upon the venerable man before me, and noted his homely and rugged yet profound and melancholy expression, I knew

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that their look was upon him also, and that a greater than Ossian had been nursed amid those lonely hills. Few men in literature have felt the burden of the world, the weight of the inexorable conscience, as has Carlyle, or drawn such fresh inspiration from that source. However we may differ from him (and almost in self-defense one must differ from a man of such intense and overweening personality), it must yet be admitted that he habitually speaks out of that primitive silence and solitude in which only the heroic soul dwells. Certainly not in contemporary British literature is there another writer whose bowstring has such a twang.

I left London in the early part of November, and turned my face westward, going leisurely through England and Wales, and stringing upon my thread a few of the famous places, as Oxford, Stratford, Warwick, Birmingham, Chester, and taking a last look at the benign land. The weather was fair; I was yoked to no companion, and was apparently the only tourist on that route. The field occupations drew my eye as usual. They were very simple, and consisted mainly of the gathering of root crops. I saw no building of fences, or of houses or barns, and no draining or improving of any kind worth mentioning, these things having all been done long ago. Speaking of barns reminds me that I do not remember to have seen a building of this kind while in England, much less a group or cluster of them as

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at home; hay and grain being always stacked, and the mildness of the climate rendering a protection of this kind unnecessary for the cattle and sheep. In contrast, America may be called the country of barns and outbuildings: —

“Thou lucky Mistress of the tranquil barns,”

as Walt Whitman apostrophizes the Union.

I missed also many familiar features in the autumn fields, — those given to our landscape by Indian corn, for instance, the tent-like stouts, the shucks, the rustling blades, the ripe pumpkins strewn the field; for, notwithstanding England is such a garden, our corn does not flourish there. I saw no buckwheat either, the red stubble and little squat figures of the upright sheaves of which are so noticeable in our farming districts at this season. Neither did I see any gathering of apples, or orchards from which to gather them. “As sure as there are apples in Herefordshire” seems to be a proverb in England; yet it is very certain that the orchard is not the institution anywhere in Britain that it is in this country, or so prominent a feature in the landscape. The native apples are inferior in size and quality, and are sold by the pound. Pears were more abundant at the fruit stands, and were of superior excellence and very cheap.

I hope it will not be set down to any egotism of mine, but rather to the effect upon an ardent pil-

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grim of the associations of the place and its renown in literature, that all my experience at Stratford seems worthy of recording, and to be invested with a sort of poetical interest, — even the fact that I walked up from the station with a handsome young countrywoman who had chanced to occupy a seat in the same compartment of the car with me from Warwick, and who, learning the nature of my visit, volunteered to show me the Red Horse Inn, as her course led her that way. We walked mostly in the middle of the street, with our umbrellas hoisted, for it was raining slightly, while a boy whom we found lying in wait for such a chance trudged along in advance of us with my luggage.

At the Red Horse the pilgrim is in no danger of having the charm and the poetical atmosphere with which he has surrounded himself dispelled, but rather enhanced and deepened, especially if he has the luck I had, to find few other guests, and to fall into the hands of one of those simple, strawberry-like English housemaids, who gives him a cozy, snug little parlor all to himself, as was the luck of Irving also; who answers his every summons, and looks into his eyes with the simplicity and directness of a child; who could step from no page but that of Scott or the divine William himself; who puts the “coals” on your grate with her own hands, and, when you ask for a lunch, spreads the cloth on one end of the table while you sit reading or writing

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at the other, and places before you a whole haunch of delicious cold mutton, with bread and home-brewed ale, and requests you to help yourself; who, when bedtime arrives, lights you up to a clean, sweet chamber, with a high-canopied bed hung with snow-white curtains; who calls you in the morning, and makes ready your breakfast while you sit with your feet on the fender before the blazing grate; and to whom you pay your reckoning on leaving, having escaped entirely all the barrenness and publicity of hotel life, and had all the privacy and quiet of home without any of its cares or interruptions. And this, let me say here, is the great charm of the characteristic English inn; it has a domestic, home-like air. "Taking mine ease at mine inn" has a real significance in England. You can take your ease and more; you can take real solid comfort. In the first place, there is no bar-room, and consequently no loafers or pimps, or fumes of tobacco or whiskey; then there is no landlord or proprietor or hotel clerk to lord it over you. The host, if there is such a person, has a way of keeping himself in the background, or absolutely out of sight, that is entirely admirable. You are monarch of all you survey. You are not made to feel that it is in some one else's house you are staying, and that you must court the master for his favor. It is your house, you are the master, and you have only to enjoy your own.

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In the gray, misty afternoon, I walked out over the Avon, like all English streams full to its grassy brim, and its current betrayed only by a floating leaf or feather, and along English fields and roads, and noted the familiar sights and sounds and smells of autumn. The spire of the church where Shakespeare lies buried shot up stately and tall from the banks of the Avon, a little removed from the village; and the church itself, more like a cathedral in size and beauty, was also visible above the trees. Thitherward I soon bent my steps, and while I was lingering among the graves,¹ reading the names and dates so many centuries old, and surveying the gray and weather-worn exterior of the church, the slow tolling of the bell announced a funeral. Upon such a stage, and amid such surroundings, with all this past for a background, the shadowy figure of the peerless bard towering over all, the incident of the moment had a strange interest to me, and I looked about for the funeral cortège. Presently a group of three or four figures appeared at the head of the avenue of limes, the foremost of them a woman, bearing an infant's coffin under her arm, wrapped in a white sheet. The clerk and sexton, with their robes on, went out to meet them, and conducted

¹ In England the church always stands in the midst of the graveyard, and hence can be approached only on foot. People, it seems, never go to church in carriages or wagons, but on foot, along paths and lanes.

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them into the church, where the service proper to such occasions was read, after which the coffin was taken out as it was brought in, and lowered into the grave. It was the smallest funeral I ever saw, and my effort to play the part of a sympathizing public by hovering in the background, I fear, was only an intrusion after all.

Having loitered to my heart's content amid the stillness of the old church, and paced to and fro above the illustrious dead, I set out, with the sun about an hour high, to see the house of Anne Hathaway at Shottery, shunning the highway and following a path that followed hedge-rows, crossed meadows and pastures, skirted turnip-fields and cabbage-patches, to a quaint gathering of low thatched houses, — a little village of farmers and laborers, about a mile from Stratford. At the gate in front of the house a boy was hitching a little gray donkey, almost hidden beneath two immense panniers filled with coarse hay.

"Whose house is this?" inquired I, not being quite able to make out the name.

"Hann' Ataway's 'ouse," said he.

So I took a good look at Anne's house, — a homely, human-looking habitation, with its old oak beams and thatched roof, — but did not go in, as Mrs. Baker, who was eying me from the door, evidently hoped I would, but chose rather to walk past it and up the slight rise of ground beyond, where I

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paused and looked out over the fields, just lit up by the setting sun. Returning, I stepped into the Shakespeare Tavern, a little, homely wayside place on a street, or more like a path, apart from the main road, and the good dame brought me some "home-brewed," which I drank sitting by a rude table on a rude bench in a small, low room, with a stone floor and an immense chimney. The coals burned cheerily, and the crane and hooks in the fireplace called up visions of my earliest childhood. Apparently the house and the surroundings, and the atmosphere of the place and the ways of the people, were what they were three hundred years ago. It was all sweet and good, and I enjoyed it hugely, and was much refreshed.

Crossing the fields in the gloaming, I came up with some children, each with a tin bucket of milk, threading their way toward Stratford. The little girl, a child ten years old, having a larger bucket than the rest, was obliged to set down her burden every few rods and rest; so I lent her a helping hand. I thought her prattle, in that broad but musical patois, and along these old hedge-rows, the most delicious I ever heard. She said they came to Shottery for milk because it was much better than they got at Stratford. In America they had a cow of their own. Had she lived in America, then? "Oh, yes, four years," and the stream of her talk was fuller at once. But I hardly recognized

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even the name of my own country in her innocent prattle; it seemed like a land of fable, — all had a remote mythological air, and I pressed my inquiries as if I was hearing of this strange land for the first time. She had an uncle still living in the “States of Hoio,” but exactly where her father had lived was not so clear. In the States somewhere, and in “Ogden’s Valley.” There was a lake there that had salt in it, and not far off was the sea. “In America,” she said, and she gave such a sweet and novel twang to her words, “we had a cow of our own, and two horses and a wagon and a dog.” “Yes,” joined in her little brother, “and nice chickens and a goose.” “But,” continued the sister, “we owns none o’ them here. In America ’most everybody owned their houses, and we could ’a’ owned a house if we had stayid.”

“What made you leave America?” I inquired.

“’Cause me father wanted to see his friends.”

“Did your mother want to come back?”

“No, me mother wanted to stay in America.”

“Is food as plenty here, — do you have as much to eat as in the States?”

“Oh, yes, and more. The first year we were in America we could not get enough to eat.”

“But you do not get meat very often here, do you?”

“Quite often,” — not so confidently.

“How often?”

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“Well, sometimes we has pig’s liver in the week time, and we allers has meat of a Sunday; we likes meat.”

Here we emerged from the fields into the highway, and the happy children went their way and I mine.

In the evening, as I was strolling about the town, a poor, crippled, half-witted fellow came jerking himself across the street after me and offered himself as a guide.

“I ’m the feller what showed Artemus Ward around when he was here. You’ve heerd on me, I expect? Not? Why, he characterized me in ‘Punch,’ he did. He asked me if Shakespeare took all the wit out of Stratford? And this is what I said to him: ‘No, he left some for me.’”

But not wishing to be guided just then, I bought the poor fellow off with a few pence, and kept on my way.

Stratford is a quiet old place, and seems mainly the abode of simple common folk. One sees no marked signs of either poverty or riches. It is situated in a beautiful expanse of rich, rolling farming country, but bears little resemblance to a rural town in America: not a tree, not a spear of grass; the houses packed close together and crowded up on the street, the older ones presenting their gables and showing their structure of oak beams. English oak seems incapable of decay even when exposed to the

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weather, while indoors it takes three or four centuries to give it its best polish and hue.

I took my last view of Stratford quite early of a bright Sunday morning, when the ground was white with a dense hoar-frost. The great church, as I approached it, loomed up under the sun through a bank of blue mist. The Avon was like glass, with little wraiths of vapor clinging here and there to its surface. Two white swans stood on its banks in front of the church, and, without regarding the mirror that so drew my eye, preened their plumage; while, farther up, a piebald cow reached down for some grass under the brink where the frost had not settled, and a piebald cow in the river reached up for the same morsel. Rooks and crows and jack-daws were noisy in the trees overhead and about the church spire. I stood a long while musing upon the scene.

At the birthplace of the poet, the keeper, an elderly woman, shivered with cold as she showed me about. The primitive, home-made appearance of things, the stone floor much worn and broken, the rude oak beams and doors, the leaden sash with the little window-panes scratched full of names, among others that of Walter Scott, the great chimneys where quite a family could literally sit in the chimney corner, were what I expected to see, and looked very human and good. It is impossible to associate anything but sterling qualities and sim-

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ple, healthful characters with these early English birthplaces. They are nests built with faithfulness and affection, and through them one seems to get a glimpse of devouter, sturdier times.

From Stratford I went back to Warwick, thence to Birmingham, thence to Shrewsbury, thence to Chester, the old Roman camp, thence to Holyhead, being intent on getting a glimpse of Wales and the Welsh, and maybe taking a tramp up Snowdon or some of his congeners, for my legs literally ached for a mountain climb, a certain set of muscles being so long unused. In the course of my journeyings, I tried each class or compartment of the cars, first, second, and third, and found but little choice. The difference is simply in the upholstering, and, if you are provided with a good shawl or wrap-up, you need not be particular about that. In the first, the floor is carpeted and the seats substantially upholstered, usually in blue woolen cloth; in the second, the seat alone is cushioned; and in the third, you sit on a bare bench. But all classes go by the same train, and often in the same car, or carriage, as they say here. In the first class travel the real and the shoddy nobility and Americans; in the second, commercial and professional men; and in the third, the same, with such of the peasantry and humbler classes as travel by rail. The only annoyance I experienced in the third class arose from the freedom with which the smokers, always largely in the

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majority, indulged in their favorite pastime. (I perceive there is one advantage in being a smoker: you are never at a loss for something to do, — you can smoke.)

At Chester I stopped overnight, selecting my hotel for its name, the “Green Dragon.” It was Sunday night, and the only street scene my rambles afforded was quite a large gathering of persons on a corner, listening, apparently with indifference or curiosity, to an ignorant, hot-headed street preacher. “Now I am going to tell you something you will not like to hear, — something that will make you angry. I know it will. It is this: I expect to go to heaven. I am perfectly confident I shall go there. I know you do not like that.” But why his hearers should not like that did not appear. For my part, I thought, for the good of all concerned, the sooner he went the better.

In the morning, I mounted the wall in front of the cathedral, and, with a very lively feeling of wonder and astonishment, walked completely around the town on top of it, a distance of about two miles. The wall, being in places as high as the houses, afforded some interesting views into attics, chambers, and back yards. I envied the citizens such a delightful promenade ground, full of variety and interest. Just the right distance, too, for a brisk turn to get up an appetite, or for a leisurely stroll to tone down a dinner; while as a place for chance

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meetings of happy lovers, or to get away from one's companions if the flame must burn in secret and in silence, it is unsurpassed. I occasionally met or passed other pedestrians, but noticed that it required a brisk pace to lessen the distance between myself and an attractive girlish figure a few hundred feet in advance of me. The railroad cuts across one corner of the town, piercing the walls with two very carefully constructed archways. Indeed, the people are very choice of the wall, and one sees posted notices of the city authorities offering a reward for any one detected in injuring it. It has stood now some seven or eight centuries, and from appearances is good for one or two more. There are several towers on the wall, from one of which some English king, over two hundred years ago, witnessed the defeat of his army on Rowton Moor. But when I was there, though the sun was shining, the atmosphere was so loaded with smoke that I could not catch even a glimpse of the moor where the battle took place. There is a gateway through the wall on each of the four sides, and this slender and beautiful but blackened and worn span, as if to afford a transit from the chamber windows on one side of the street to those of the other, is the first glimpse the traveler gets of the wall. The gates beneath the arches have entirely disappeared. The ancient and carved oak fronts of the buildings on the main street, and the inclosed sidewalk that ran through the second stories

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of the shops and stores, were not less strange and novel to me. The sidewalk was like a gentle upheaval in its swervings and undulations, or like a walk through the woods, the oaken posts and braces on the outside answering for the trees, and the prospect ahead for the vista.

The ride along the coast of Wales was crowded with novelty and interest, — the sea on one side and the mountains on the other, — the latter bleak and heathery in the foreground, but cloud-capped and snow-white in the distance. The afternoon was dark and lowering, and just before entering Conway we had a very striking view. A turn in the road suddenly brought us to where we looked through a black framework of heathery hills, and beheld Snowdon and his chiefs apparently with the full rigors of winter upon them. It was so satisfying that I lost at once my desire to tramp up them. I barely had time to turn from the mountains to get a view of Conway Castle, one of the largest and most impressive ruins I saw. The train cuts close to the great round tower, and plunges through the wall of gray, shelving stone into the bluff beyond, giving the traveler only time to glance and marvel.

About the only glimpse I got of the Welsh character was on this route. At one of the stations, Abergele I think, a fresh, blooming young woman got into our compartment, occupied by myself and

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two commercial travelers (bag-men, or, as we say, "drummers"), and, before she could take her seat, was complimented by one of them on her good looks. Feeling in a measure responsible for the honor and good-breeding of the compartment, I could hardly conceal my embarrassment; but the young Abergeless herself did not seem to take it amiss, and when presently the jolly bag-man addressed his conversation to her, replied befittingly and good-naturedly. As she arose to leave the car at her destination, a few stations beyond, he said "he thought it a pity that such a sweet, pretty girl should leave us so soon," and seizing her hand the audacious rascal actually solicited a kiss. I expected this would be the one drop too much, and that we should have a scene, and began to regard myself in the light of an avenger of an insulted Welsh beauty, when my heroine paused, and I believe actually deliberated whether or not to comply before two spectators! Certain it is that she yielded the highwayman her hand, and, bidding him a gentle good-night in Welsh, smilingly and blushing left the car. "Ah," said the villain, "these Welsh girls are capital; I know them like a book, and have had many a lark with them."

At Holyhead I got another glimpse of the Welsh. I had booked for Dublin, and having several hours on my hands of a dark, threatening night before the departure of the steamer, I sallied out in the old

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town tilted up against the side of the hill, in the most adventurous spirit I could summon, threading my way through the dark, deserted streets, pausing for a moment in front of a small house with closed doors and closely shuttered windows, where I heard suppressed voices, the monotonous scraping of a fiddle, and a lively shuffling of feet, and passing on finally entered, drawn by the musical strains, a quaint old place, where a blind harper, seated in the corner of a rude kind of coffee and sitting room, was playing on a harp. I liked the atmosphere of the place, so primitive and wholesome, and was quite willing to have my attention drawn off from the increasing storm without, and from the bitter cup which I knew the Irish sea was preparing for me. The harper presently struck up a livelier strain, when two Welsh girls, who were chatting before the grate, one of them as dumpy as a bag of meal and the other slender and tall, stepped into the middle of the floor and began to dance to the delicious music, a Welsh mechanic and myself drinking our ale and looking on approvingly. After a while the pleasant, modest-looking bar-maid, whom I had seen behind the beer-levers as I entered, came in, and, after looking on for a moment, was persuaded to lay down her sewing and join in the dance. Then there came in a sandy-haired Welshman, who could speak and understand only his native dialect, and finding his neighbors affiliating

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with an Englishman, as he supposed, and trying to speak the hateful tongue, proceeded to berate them sharply (for it appears the Welsh are still jealous of the English); but when they explained to him that I was not an Englishman, but an American, and had already twice stood the beer all around (at an outlay of sixpence), he subsided into a sulky silence, and regarded me intently.

About eleven o'clock a policeman paused at the door, and intimated that it was time the house was shut up and the music stopped, and to outward appearances his friendly warning was complied with; but the harp still discoursed in a minor key, and a light tripping and shuffling of responsive feet might occasionally have been heard for an hour later. When I arose to go, it was with a feeling of regret that I could not see more of this simple and social people, with whom I at once felt that "touch of nature" which "makes the whole world kin," and my leave-taking was warm and hearty accordingly.

Through the wind and the darkness I threaded my way to the wharf, and in less than two hours afterward was a most penitent voyager, and fitfully joining in that doleful gastriloquial chorus that so often goes up from the cabins of those Channel steamers.

I hardly know why I went to Ireland, except it was to indulge the few drops of Irish blood in my veins, and maybe also with a view to shorten

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my sea voyage by a day. I also felt a desire to see one or two literary men there, and in this sense my journey was eminently gratifying; but so far from shortening my voyage by a day, it lengthened it by three days, that being the time it took me to recover from the effects of it; and as to the tie of blood, I think it must nearly all have run out, for I felt but few congenital throbs while in Ireland.

The Englishman at home is a much more lovable animal than the Englishman abroad, but Pat in Ireland is even more of a pig than in this country. Indeed, the squalor and poverty, and cold, skinny wretchedness one sees in Ireland, and (what freezes our sympathies) the groveling, swiny shiftlessness that pervades these hovels, no traveler can be prepared for. It is the bare prose of misery, the unheroic of tragedy. There is not one redeeming or mitigating feature.

Railway traveling in Ireland is not so rapid or so cheap as in England. Neither are the hotels so good or so clean, nor the fields so well kept, nor the look of the country so thrifty and peaceful. The dissatisfaction of the people is in the very air. Ireland looks sour and sad. She looks old, too, as do all those countries beyond seas, — old in a way that the American is a stranger to. It is not the age of nature, the unshaken permanence of the hills through long periods of time, but the weight of human years and human sorrows, as if the earth

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sympathized with man and took on his attributes and infirmities.

I did not go much about Dublin, and the most characteristic things I saw there were those queer, uncomfortable dog-carts, — a sort of Irish bull on wheels, with the driver on one side balancing the passenger on the other, and the luggage occupying the seat of safety between. It comes the nearest to riding on horseback, and on a side-saddle at that, of any vehicle-traveling I ever did.

I stopped part of a day at Mallow, an old town on the Blackwater, in one of the most fertile agricultural districts of Ireland. The situation is fine, and an American naturally expects to see a charming rural town, planted with trees and filled with clean, comfortable homes; but he finds instead a wretched place, smitten with a plague of filth and mud, and offering but one object upon which the eye can dwell with pleasure, and that is the ruins of an old castle, "Mallow Castle over Blackwater," which dates back to the time of Queen Elizabeth. It stands amid noble trees on the banks of the river, and its walls, some of them thirty or forty feet high, are completely overrun with ivy. The Blackwater, a rapid, amber-colored stream, is spanned at this point by a superb granite bridge.

And I will say here that anything like a rural town in our sense, — a town with trees and grass and large spaces about the houses, gardens, yards,

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shrubby, coolness, fragrance, — seems unknown in England or Ireland. The towns and villages are all remnants of feudal times, and seem to have been built with an eye to safety and compactness, or else men were more social, and loved to get closer together, then than now. Perhaps the damp, chilly climate made them draw nearer together. At any rate, the country towns are little cities; or rather it is as if another London had been cut up in little and big pieces and distributed over the land.

In the afternoon, to take the kinks out of my legs, and to quicken, if possible, my circulation a little, which since the passage over the Channel had felt as if it was thick and green, I walked rapidly to the top of the Knockmeledown Mountains, getting a good view of Irish fields and roads and fences as I went up, and a very wide and extensive view of the country after I had reached the summit, and improving the atmosphere of my physical tenement amazingly. These mountains have no trees or bushes or other growth than a harsh prickly heather, about a foot high, which begins exactly at the foot of the mountain. You are walking on smooth, fine meadow land, when you leap a fence and there is the heather. On the highest point of this mountain, and on the highest point of all the mountains around, was a low stone mound, which I was puzzled to know the meaning of. Standing there, the country rolled away beneath me under a cold, gray Novem-

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ber sky, and, as was the case with the English landscape, looked singularly desolate, — the desolation of a dearth of human homes, industrial centres, families, workers, and owners of the soil. Few roads, scarce ever a vehicle, no barns, no groups of bright, well-ordered buildings, indeed no farms and neighborhoods and schoolhouses, but a wide spread of rich, highly cultivated country, with here and there, visible to close scrutiny, small gray stone houses with thatched roofs, the abodes of poverty and wretchedness. A recent English writer says the first thing that struck him in American landscape-painting was the absence of man and the domestic animals from the pictures, and the preponderance of rude, wild nature; and his first view of this country seems to have made the same impression. But it is certainly true that the traveler through any of our older States will see ten houses, rural habitations, to one in England or Ireland, though, as a matter of course, nature here looks much less domesticated, and much less expressive of human occupancy and contact. The Old World people have clung to the soil closer and more lovingly than we do. The ground has been more precious. They have had none to waste, and have made the most of every inch of it. Wherever they have touched they have taken root and thriven as best they could. Then the American is more cosmopolitan and less domestic. He is not so local in his feelings and attachments. He does

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not bestow himself upon the earth or upon his home as his ancestors did. He feathers his nest very little. Why should he? He may migrate to-morrow and build another. He is like the passenger pigeon that lays its eggs and rears its young upon a little platform of bare twigs. Our poverty and nakedness is in this respect, I think, beyond dispute. There is nothing nest-like about our homes, either in their interiors or exteriors. Even wealth and taste and foreign aids rarely attain that cozy, mellowing atmosphere that pervades not only the lowly birthplaces but the halls and manor houses of older lands. And what do our farms represent but so much real estate, so much cash value?

Only where man loves the soil, and nestles to it closely and long, will it take on this beneficent and human look which foreign travelers miss in our landscape; and only where homes are built with fondness and emotion, and in obedience to the social, paternal, and domestic instincts, will they hold the charm and radiate and be warm with the feeling I have described.

And, while I am upon the subject, I will add that European cities differ from ours in this same particular. They have a homelier character, — more the air of dwelling-places, the abodes of men drawn together for other purposes than traffic. People actually live in them, and find life sweet and festal. But what does our greatest city, New York, express

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besides commerce or politics, or what other reason has it for its existence? This is, of course, in a measure the result of the modern worldly and practical business spirit which more and more animates all nations, and which led Carlyle to say of his own countrymen that they were becoming daily more "flat, stupid, and mammonish." Yet I am persuaded that in our case it is traceable also to the leanness and depletion of our social and convivial instincts, and to the fact that the material cares of life are more serious and engrossing with us than with any other people.

I spent part of a day at Cork, wandering about the town, threading my way through the back streets and alleys, and seeing life reduced to fewer makeshifts than I had ever before dreamed of. I went through, or rather skirted, a kind of second-hand market, where the most sorry and dilapidated articles of clothing and household utensils were offered for sale, and where the cobblers were cobbling up old shoes that would hardly hold together. Then the wretched old women one sees, without any sprinkling of young ones, — youth and age alike bloomless and unlovely.

In a meadow on the hills that encompass the city, I found the American dandelion in bloom, and some large red clover, and started up some skylarks as I might start up the field sparrows in our own uplying fields.

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Is the magpie a Celt and a Catholic? I saw not one in England, but plenty of them in France, and again when I reached Ireland.

At Queenstown I awaited the steamer from Liverpool, and about nine o'clock in the morning was delighted to see her long black form moving up the bay. She came to anchor about a mile or two out, and a little tug was in readiness to take us off. A score or more of emigrants, each with a bag and a box, had been waiting all the morning at the wharf. When the time of embarkation arrived, the agent stepped aboard the tug and called out their names one by one, when Bridget and Catherine and Patrick and Michael, and the rest, came aboard, received their tickets, and passed "forward," with a half-frightened, half-bewildered look. But not much emotion was displayed until the boat began to move off, when the tears fell freely, and they continued to fall faster and faster, and the sobs to come thicker and thicker, until, as the faces of friends began to fade on the wharf, both men and women burst out into a loud, unrestrained bawl. This sudden demonstration of grief seemed to frighten the children and smaller fry, who up to this time had been very jovial; but now, suspecting something was wrong, they all broke out in a most pitiful chorus, forming an anti-climax to the wail of their parents that was quite amusing, and that seemed to have its effect upon the "children of a larger growth,"

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for they instantly hushed their lamentations and turned their attention toward the great steamer. There was a rugged but bewildered old granny among them, on her way to join her daughter somewhere in the interior of New York, who seemed to regard me with a kindred eye, and toward whom, I confess, I felt some family affinity. Before we had got halfway to the vessel, the dear old creature missed a sheet from her precious bundle of worldly effects, and very confidentially told me that her suspicions pointed to the stoker, a bristling, sooty "wild Irishman." The stoker resented the insinuation, and I overheard him berating the old lady in Irish so sharply and threateningly (I had no doubt of his guilt) that she was quite frightened, and ready to retract the charge to hush the man up. She seemed to think her troubles had just begun. If they behaved thus to her on the little tug, what would they not do on board the great black steamer itself? So when she got separated from her luggage in getting aboard the vessel, her excitement was great, and I met her following about the man whom she had accused of filching her bed linen, as if he must have the clew to the lost bed itself. Her face brightened when she saw me, and, giving me a terribly hard wink and a most expressive nudge, she said she wished I would keep near her a little. This I did, and soon had the pleasure of leaving her happy and reassured beside her box and bundle.

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The passage home, though a rough one, was cheerfully and patiently borne. I found a compound motion, — the motion of a screw steamer, a roll and a plunge — less trying to my head than the simple rocking or pitching of the side-wheeled Scotia. One motion was in a measure a foil to the other. My brain, acted upon by two forces, was compelled to take the hypotenuse, and I think the concussion was considerably diminished thereby. The vessel was forever trembling upon the verge of immense watery chasms that opened now under her port bow, now under her starboard, and that almost made one catch his breath as he looked into them; yet the noble ship had a way of skirting them or striding across them that was quite wonderful. Only five days was I compelled to “hole up” in my stateroom, hibernating, weathering the final rude shock of the Atlantic. Part of this time I was capable of feeling a languid interest in the oscillations of my coat suspended from a hook in the door. Back and forth, back and forth, all day long, vibrated this black pendulum, at long intervals touching the sides of the room, indicating great lateral or diagonal motion of the ship. The great waves, I observed, go in packs like wolves. Now one would pounce upon her, then another, then another, in quick succession, making the ship strain every nerve to shake them off. Then she would glide along quietly for some minutes, and my coat

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would register but a few degrees in its imaginary arc, when another band of the careering demons would cross our path and harass us as before. Sometimes they would pound and thump on the sides of the vessel like immense sledge-hammers, beginning away up toward the bows and quickly running down her whole length, jarring, raking, and venting their wrath in a very audible manner; or a wave would rake along the side with a sharp, ringing, metallic sound, like a huge spear-point seeking a vulnerable place; or some hard-backed monster would rise up from the deep and grate and bump the whole length of the keel, forcibly suggesting hidden rocks and consequent wreck and ruin.

Then it seems there is always some biggest wave to be met somewhere on the voyage, — a monster billow that engulfs disabled vessels, and sometimes carries away parts of the rigging of the stanchest. This big wave struck us the third day out about midnight, and nearly threw us all out of our berths, and careened the ship over so far that it seemed to take her last pound of strength to right herself up again. There was a slamming of doors, a rush of crockery, and a screaming of women, heard above the general din and confusion, while the steerage passengers thought their last hour had come. The vessel before us encountered this giant wave during a storm in mid-ocean, and was completely buried beneath it; one of the officers was swept over-

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board, the engines suddenly stopped, and there was a terrible moment during which it seemed uncertain whether the vessel would shake off the sea or go to the bottom.

Besides observing the oscillations of my coat, I had at times a stupid satisfaction in seeing my two new London trunks belabor each other about my stateroom floor. Nearly every day they would break from their fastenings under my berth and start on a wild race for the opposite side of the room. Naturally enough, the little trunk would always get the start of the big one, but the big one followed close, and sometimes caught the little one in a very uncomfortable manner. Once a knife and fork and a breakfast plate slipped off the sofa and joined in the race; but, if not distanced, they got sadly the worst of it, especially the plate. But the carpet had the most reason to complain. Two or three turns sufficed to loosen it from the floor, when, shoved to one side, the two trunks took turns in butting it. I used to allow this sport to go on till it grew monotonous, when I would alternately shout and ring until "Robert" appeared and restored order.

The condition of certain picture-frames and vases and other frail articles among my effects, when I reached home, called to mind not very pleasantly this drunken frolic.

It is impossible not to sympathize with the ship in her struggles with the waves. You are lying

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there wedged into your berth, and she seems indeed a thing of life and conscious power. She is built entirely of iron, is 500 feet long, and, besides other freight, carries 2500 tons of railroad iron, which lies down there flat in her bottom, a dead, indigestible weight, so unlike a cargo in bulk; yet she is a quickened spirit for all that. You feel every wave that strikes her; you feel the sea bearing her down; she has run her nose into one of those huge swells, and a solid blue wall of water tons in weight comes over her bows and floods her forward deck; she braces herself, every rod and rivet and timber seems to lend its support; you almost expect to see the wooden walls of your room grow rigid with muscular contraction; she trembles from stem to stern, she recovers, she breaks the gripe of her antagonist, and, rising up, shakes the sea from her with a kind of gleeful wrath; I hear the torrents of water rush along the lower decks, and, finding a means of escape, pour back into the sea, glad to get away on any terms, and I say, "Noble ship! you are indeed a god!"

I wanted to see a first-class storm at sea, and perhaps ought to be satisfied with the heavy blow or hurricane we had when off Sable Island, but I confess I was not, though, by the lying-to of the vessel and the frequent soundings, it was evident there was danger about. A dense fog uprose, which did not drift like a land fog, but was as immovable as

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iron; it was like a spell, a misty enchantment; and out of this fog came the wind, a steady, booming blast, that smote the ship over on her side and held her there, and howled in the rigging like a chorus of fiends. The waves did not know which way to flee; they were heaped up and then scattered in a twinkling. I thought of the terrible line of one of our poets: —

“The spasm of the sky and the shatter of the sea.”

The sea looked wrinkled and old and oh, so pitiless! I had stood long before Turner's “Shipwreck” in the National Gallery in London, and this sea recalled his, and I appreciated more than ever the artist's great powers.

These storms, it appears, are rotary in their wild dance and promenade up and down the seas. “Look the wind squarely in the teeth,” said an ex-sea-captain among the passengers, “and eight points to the right in the northern hemisphere will be the centre of the storm, and eight points to the left in the southern hemisphere.” I remembered that, in Victor Hugo's terrible dynamics, storms revolved in the other direction in the northern hemisphere, or followed the hands of a watch, while south of the equator they no doubt have ways equally original.

Late in the afternoon the storm abated, the fog was suddenly laid, and, looking toward the setting sun, I saw him athwart the wildest, most desolate

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scene in which it was ever my fortune to behold the face of that god. The sea was terribly agitated, and the endless succession of leaping, frothing waves between me and the glowing west formed a picture I shall not soon forget.

I think the excuse that is often made in behalf of American literature, namely, that our people are too busy with other things yet, and will show the proper aptitude in this field, too, as soon as leisure is afforded, is fully justified by events of daily occurrence. Throw a number of them together without anything else to do, and they at once communicate to each other the itch of authorship. Confine them on board an ocean steamer, and by the third or fourth day a large number of them will break out all over with a sort of literary rash that nothing will assuage but some newspaper or journalistic enterprise which will give the poems and essays and jokes with which they are surcharged a chance to be seen and heard of men. I doubt if the like ever occurs among travelers of any other nationality. Englishmen or Frenchmen or Germans want something more warm and human, if less "refined;" but the average American, when in company, likes nothing so well as an opportunity to show the national trait of "smartness." There is not a bit of danger that we shall ever relapse into barbarism while so much latent literature lies at the bottom of our daily cares and avocations, and is sure to come

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to the surface the moment the latter are suspended or annulled!

While abreast of New England, and I don't know how many miles at sea, as I turned in my deck promenade, I distinctly scented the land, — a subtle, delicious odor of farms and homesteads, warm and human, that floated on the wild sea air, a promise and a token. The broad red line that had been slowly creeping across our chart for so many weary days, indicating the path of the ship, had now completely bridged the chasm, and had got a good purchase down under the southern coast of New England, and according to the reckoning we ought to have made Sandy Hook that night; but though the position of the vessel was no doubt theoretically all right, yet practically she proved to be much farther out at sea, for all that afternoon and night she held steadily on her course, and not till next morning did the coast of Long Island, like a thin, broken cloud just defined on the horizon, come into view. But before many hours we had passed the Hook, and were moving slowly up the bay in the midday splendor of the powerful and dazzling light of the New World sun. And how good things looked to me after even so brief an absence! — the brilliancy, the roominess, the deep transparent blue of the sky, the clear, sharp outlines, the metropolitan splendor of New York, and especially of Broadway; and as I walked up that

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great thoroughfare, and noted the familiar physiognomy and the native nonchalance and independence, I experienced the delight that only the returned traveler can feel, — the instant preference of one's own country and countrymen over all the rest of the world.

BIRDS AND POETS
WITH OTHER PAPERS

PREFACE

I HAVE deliberated a long time about coupling some of my sketches of outdoor nature with a few chapters of a more purely literary character, and thus confiding to my reader what absorbs and delights me inside my four walls, as well as what pleases and engages me outside those walls; especially since I have aimed to bring my outdoor spirit and method within, and still to look upon my subject with the best naturalist's eye I could command.

I hope, therefore, he will not be scared away when I boldly confront him in the latter portions of my book with this name of strange portent, Walt Whitman, for I assure him that in this misjudged man he may press the strongest poetic pulse that has yet beaten in America, or perhaps in modern times.

Then, these chapters are a proper supplement or continuation of my themes and their analogy in literature, because in them we shall "follow out these lessons of the earth and air," and behold their application to higher matters.

It is not an artificially graded path strewn with roses that invites us in this part, but, let me hope,

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something better, a rugged trail through the woods
or along the beach where we shall now and then
get a whiff of natural air, or a glimpse of some-
thing to

“ Make the wild blood start

In its mystic springs.”

ESOPUS-ON-HUDSON, March, 1877.

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BIRDS AND POETS

I

BIRDS AND POETS

“ In summer, when the shawes be shene,
And leaves be large and long,
It is full merry in fair forest
To hear the fowlés’ song.
The wood-wele sang, and wolde not cease,
Sitting upon the spray ;
So loud, it wakened Robin Hood
In the greenwood where he lay.”

IT might almost be said that the birds are all birds of the poets and of no one else, because it is only the poetical temperament that fully responds to them. So true is this, that all the great ornithologists — original namers and biographers of the birds — have been poets in deed if not in word. Audubon is a notable case in point, who, if he had not the tongue or the pen of the poet, certainly had the eye and ear and heart — “the fluid and attaching character” — and the singleness of purpose, the enthusiasm, the unworldliness, the love, that characterize the true and divine race of bards.

So had Wilson, though perhaps not in as large a

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measure; yet he took fire as only a poet can. While making a journey on foot to Philadelphia, shortly after landing in this country, he caught sight of the red-headed woodpecker flitting among the trees, — a bird that shows like a tricolored scarf among the foliage, — and it so kindled his enthusiasm that his life was devoted to the pursuit of the birds from that day. It was a lucky hit. Wilson had already set up as a poet in Scotland, and was still fermenting when the bird met his eye and suggested to his soul a new outlet for its enthusiasm.

The very idea of a bird is a symbol and a suggestion to the poet. A bird seems to be at the top of the scale, so vehement and intense is his life, — large-brained, large-lunged, hot, ecstatic, his frame charged with buoyancy and his heart with song. The beautiful vagabonds, endowed with every grace, masters of all climes, and knowing no bounds, — how many human aspirations are realized in their free, holiday lives, and how many suggestions to the poet in their flight and song!

Indeed, is not the bird the original type and teacher of the poet, and do we not demand of the human lark or thrush that he “shake out his carols” in the same free and spontaneous manner as his winged prototype? Kingsley has shown how surely the old minnesingers and early ballad-writers have learned of the birds, taking their key-note from the blackbird, or the wood-lark, or the throstle, and

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giving utterance to a melody as simple and unstudied. Such things as the following were surely caught from the fields or the woods: —

“She sat down below a thorn,
Fine flowers in the valley,
And there has she her sweet babe borne,
And the green leaves they grow rarely.”

Or the best lyric pieces, how like they are to certain bird-songs! — clear, ringing, ecstatic, and suggesting that challenge and triumph which the outpouring of the male bird contains. (Is not the genuine singing, lyrical quality essentially masculine?) Keats and Shelley, perhaps more notably than any other English poets, have the bird organization and the piercing wild-bird cry. This, of course, is not saying that they are the greatest poets, but that they have preëminently the sharp semitones of the sparrows and the larks.

But when the general reader thinks of the birds of the poets, he very naturally calls to mind the renowned birds, the lark and the nightingale, Old World melodists, embalmed in Old World poetry, but occasionally appearing on these shores, transported in the verse of some callow singer.

The very oldest poets, the towering antique bards, seem to make little mention of the song-birds. They loved better the soaring, swooping birds of prey, the eagle, the ominous birds, the vultures, the

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storks and cranes, or the clamorous sea-birds and the screaming hawks. These suited better the rugged, warlike character of the times and the simple, powerful souls of the singers themselves. Homer must have heard the twittering of the swallows, the cry of the plover, the voice of the turtle, and the warble of the nightingale; but they were not adequate symbols to express what he felt or to adorn his theme. Æschylus saw in the eagle "the dog of Jove," and his verse cuts like a sword with such a conception.

It is not because the old bards were less as poets, but that they were more as men. To strong, susceptible characters, the music of nature is not confined to sweet sounds. The defiant scream of the hawk circling aloft, the wild whinny of the loon, the whooping of the crane, the booming of the bittern, the vulpine bark of the eagle, the loud trumpeting of the migratory geese sounding down out of the midnight sky; or by the seashore, the coast of New Jersey or Long Island, the wild crooning of the flocks of gulls, repeated, continued by the hour, swirling sharp and shrill, rising and falling like the wind in a storm, as they circle above the beach or dip to the dash of the waves, — are much more welcome in certain moods than any and all mere bird-melodies, in keeping as they are with the shaggy and untamed features of ocean and woods, and suggesting something like the Richard Wagner music in the ornithological orchestra.

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“Nor these alone whose notes
Nice-fingered art must emulate in vain,
But cawing rooks, and kites that swim sublime
In still repeated circles, screaming loud,
The jay, the pie, and even the boding owl,
That hails the rising moon, have charms for me.”

says Cowper. “I never hear,” says Burns in one of his letters, “the loud, solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of gray plovers in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry.”

Even the Greek minor poets, the swarm of them that are represented in the Greek Anthology, rarely make affectionate mention of the birds, except perhaps Sappho, whom Ben Jonson makes speak of the nightingale as —

“The dear glad angel of the spring.”

The cicada, the locust, and the grasshopper are often referred to, but rarely by name any of the common birds. That Greek grasshopper must have been a wonderful creature. He was a sacred object in Greece, and is spoken of by the poets as a charming songster. What we would say of birds the Greek said of this favorite insect. When Socrates and Phædrus came to the fountain shaded by the plane-tree, where they had their famous discourse, Socrates said: “Observe the freshness of the spot,

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how charming and very delightful it is, and how summer-like and shrill it sounds from the choir of grasshoppers." One of the poets in the Anthology finds a grasshopper struggling in a spider's web, which he releases with the words: —

"Go safe and free with your sweet voice of song."

Another one makes the insect say to a rustic who had captured him: —

"Me, the Nymphs' wayside minstrel whose sweet note
O'er sultry hill is heard, and shady grove to float."

Still another sings how a grasshopper took the place of a broken string on his lyre, and "filled the cadence due."

"For while six chords beneath my fingers cried,
He with his tuneful voice the seventh supplied;
The midday songster of the mountain set
His pastoral ditty to my canzonet;
And when he sang, his modulated throat
Accorded with the lifeless string I smote."

While we are trying to introduce the lark in this country, why not try this Pindaric grasshopper also?

It is to the literary poets and to the minstrels of a softer age that we must look for special mention of the song-birds and for poetical rhapsodies upon them. The nightingale is the most general favorite, and nearly all the more noted English poets have sung her praises. To the melancholy poet she is melancholy, and to the cheerful she is cheerful.

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Shakespeare in one of his sonnets speaks of her song as mournful, while Martial calls her the "most garrulous" of birds. Milton sang: —

"Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy,
Thee, chantress, oft the woods among
I woo, to hear thy evening song."

To Wordsworth she told another story: —

"O nightingale! thou surely art
A creature of ebullient heart;
These notes of thine, — they pierce and pierce, —
Tumultuous harmony and fierce!
Thou sing'st as if the god of wine
Had helped thee to a valentine;
A song in mockery and despite
Of shades, and dews, and silent night,
And steady bliss, and all the loves
Now sleeping in these peaceful groves."

In a like vein Coleridge sang: —

"'Tis the merry nightingale
That crowds and hurries and precipitates
With fast, thick warble his delicious notes."

Keats's poem on the nightingale is doubtless more in the spirit of the bird's strain than any other. It is less a description of the song and more the song itself. Hood called the nightingale

"The sweet and plaintive Sappho of the dell."

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I mention the nightingale only to point my remarks upon its American rival, the famous mockingbird of the Southern States, which is also a nightingale, — a night-singer, — and which no doubt excels the Old World bird in the variety and compass of its powers. The two birds belong to totally distinct families, there being no American species which answers to the European nightingale, as there are that answer to the robin, the cuckoo, the blackbird, and numerous others. Philomel has the color, manners, and habits of a thrush, — our hermit thrush, — but it is not a thrush at all, but a warbler. I gather from the books that its song is protracted and full rather than melodious, — a capricious, long-continued warble, doubling and redoubling, rising and falling, issuing from the groves and the great gardens, and associated in the minds of the poets with love and moonlight and the privacy of sequestered walks. All our sympathies and attractions are with the bird, and we do not forget that Arabia and Persia are there back of its song.

Our nightingale has mainly the reputation of the caged bird, and is famed mostly for its powers of mimicry, which are truly wonderful, enabling the bird to exactly reproduce and even improve upon the notes of almost any other songster. But in a state of freedom it has a song of its own which is infinitely rich and various. It is a garrulous poly-

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glot when it chooses to be, and there is a dash of the clown and the buffoon in its nature which too often flavors its whole performance, especially in captivity ; but in its native haunts, and when its love-passion is upon it, the serious and even grand side of its character comes out. In Alabama and Florida its song may be heard all through the sultry summer night, at times low and plaintive, then full and strong. A friend of Thoreau and a careful observer, who has resided in Florida, tells me that this bird is a much more marvelous singer than it has the credit of being. He describes a habit it has of singing on the wing on moonlight nights, that would be worth going South to hear. Starting from a low bush, it mounts in the air and continues its flight apparently to an altitude of several hundred feet, remaining on the wing a number of minutes, and pouring out its song with the utmost clearness and abandon,— a slowly rising musical rocket that fills the night air with harmonious sounds. Here are both the lark and nightingale in one ; and if poets were as plentiful down South as they are in New England, we should have heard of this song long ago, and had it celebrated in appropriate verse. But so far only one Southern poet, Wilde, has accredited the bird this song. This he has done in the following admirable sonnet:—

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TO THE MOCKINGBIRD

Winged mimic of the woods! thou motley fool!
Who shall thy gay buffoonery describe?
Thine ever-ready notes of ridicule
Pursue thy fellows still with jest and gibe.
Wit — sophist — songster — Yorick of thy tribe,
Thou sportive satirist of Nature's school,
To thee the palm of scoffing we ascribe,
Arch scoffer, and mad Abbot of Misrule!
For such thou art by day — but all night long
Thou pour'st a soft, sweet, pensive, solemn strain,
As if thou didst in this, thy moonlight song,
Like to the melancholy Jaques, complain,
Musing on falsehood, violence, and wrong,
And sighing for thy motley coat again.

Aside from this sonnet, the mockingbird has got into poetical literature, so far as I know, in only one notable instance, and that in the page of a poet where we would least expect to find him,—a bard who habitually bends his ear only to the musical surge and rhythmus of total nature, and is as little wont to turn aside for any special beauties or points as the most austere of the ancient masters. I refer to Walt Whitman's "Out of the cradle endlessly rocking," in which the mockingbird plays a part. The poet's treatment of the bird is entirely ideal and eminently characteristic. That is to say, it is altogether poetical and not at all ornithological; yet

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it contains a rendering or free translation of a bird-song — the nocturne of the mockingbird, singing and calling through the night for its lost mate — that I consider quite unmatched in our literature: —

Once, Paumanok,
When the snows had melted, and the Fifth-month grass
was growing,

Up this seashore, in some briers,
Two guests from Alabama — two together,
And their nest, and four light green eggs, spotted with
brown,

And every day the he-bird, to and fro, near at hand,
And every day the she-bird, crouched on her nest, silent,
with bright eyes,

And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never dis-
turbng them,

Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

*Shine ! Shine ! Shine !
Pour down your warmth, great Sun !
While we bask — we two together.*

*Two together !
Winds blow South, or winds blow North,
Day come white, or night come black,
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,
Singing all time, minding no time,
If we two but keep together.*

Till of a sudden,
Maybe killed unknown to her mate,

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One forenoon the she-bird crouched not on the nest,
Nor returned that afternoon, nor the next,
Nor ever appeared again.

And thenceforward all summer, in the sound of the sea,
And at night, under the full of the moon, in calmer
weather,
Over the hoarse surging of the sea,
Or flitting from brier to brier by day,
I saw, I heard at intervals, the remaining one, the he-bird,
The solitary guest from Alabama.

Blow! blow! blow!
Blow up, sea-winds, along Paumanok's shore!
I wait and I wait, till you blow my mate to me.

Yes, when the stars glistened,
All night long, on the prong of a moss-scalloped stake,
Down, almost amid the slapping waves,
Sat the lone singer, wonderful, causing tears.

He called on his mate:
He poured forth the meanings which I, of all men, know.

Soothe! soothe! soothe!
Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,
And again another behind, embracing and lapping, every
one close,
But my love soothes not me, not me.

Low hangs the moon — it rose late.
Oh it is lagging — oh I think it is heavy with love, with
love.

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*Oh madly the sea pushes, pushes upon the land,
With love — with love.*

*O night! do I not see my love fluttering out there among
the breakers!
What is that little black thing I see there in the white?*

*Loud! loud! loud!
Loud I call to you, my love!
High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves:
Surely you must know who is here, is here;
You must know who I am, my love.*

*Low-hanging moon!
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?
Oh it is the shape, the shape of my mate!
O moon, do not keep her from me any longer.*

*Land! land! O land!
Whichever way I turn, oh I think you could give my mate
back again, if you only would;
For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look.*

*O rising stars!
Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with
some of you.*

*O throat! O trembling throat!
Sound clearer through the atmosphere!
Pierce the woods, the earth;
Somewhere listening to catch you, must be the one I want.*

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*Shake out, carols !
Solitary here — the night's carols !
Carols of lonesome love ! Death's carols !
Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon !
Oh, under that moon, where she droops almost down into
the sea !
O reckless, despairing carols.*

*But soft ! sink low !
Soft ! let me just murmur ;
And do you wait a moment, you husky-noised sea ;
For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding to me,
So faint — I must be still, be still to listen !
But not altogether still, for then she might not come imme-
diately to me.*

*Hither, my love !
Here I am ! Here !
With this just-sustained note I announce myself to you ;
This gentle call is for you, my love, for you.*

*Do not be decoyed elsewhere !
That is the whistle of the wind — it is not my voice ;
That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray ;
Those are the shadows of leaves.*

*O darkness ! Oh in vain !
Oh I am very sick and sorrowful.*

.

The bird that occupies the second place to the
nightingale in British poetical literature is the sky-

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lark, a pastoral bird as the Philomel is an arboreal, — a creature of light and air and motion, the companion of the plowman, the shepherd, the harvester, — whose nest is in the stubble and whose tryst is in the clouds. Its life affords that kind of contrast which the imagination loves, — one moment a plain pedestrian bird, hardly distinguishable from the ground, the next a soaring, untiring songster, reveling in the upper air, challenging the eye to follow him and the ear to separate his notes.

The lark's song is not especially melodious, but is blithesome, sibilant, and unceasing. Its type is the grass, where the bird makes its home, abounding, multitudinous, the notes nearly all alike and all in the same key, but rapid, swarming, prodigal, showering down as thick and fast as drops of rain in a summer shower.

Many noted poets have sung the praises of the lark, or been kindled by his example. Shelley's ode and Wordsworth's "To a Skylark" are well known to all readers of poetry, while every school-boy will recall Hogg's poem, beginning: —

"Bird of the wilderness,
Blithesome and cumberless,
Sweet be thy matin o'er moorland and lea!
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place —
Oh to abide in the desert with thee!"

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I heard of an enthusiastic American who went about English fields hunting a lark with Shelley's poem in his hand, thinking no doubt to use it as a kind of guide-book to the intricacies and harmonies of the song. He reported not having heard any larks, though I have little doubt they were soaring and singing about him all the time, though of course they did not sing to his ear the song that Shelley heard. The poets are the best natural historians, only you must know how to read them. They translate the facts largely and freely. A celebrated lady once said to Turner, "I confess I cannot see in nature what you do." "Ah, madam," said the complacent artist, "don't you wish you could!"

Shelley's poem is perhaps better known, and has a higher reputation among literary folk, than Wordsworth's; it is more lyrical and lark-like; but it is needlessly long, though no longer than the lark's song itself, but the lark can't help it, and Shelley can. I quote only a few stanzas: —

"In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning
Thou dost float and run,
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

"The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;

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Like a star of heaven,
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

“Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear,
Until we hardly see — we feel that it is there;

“All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when Night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is over-
flowed.”

Wordsworth has written two poems upon the lark, in one of which he calls the bird “pilgrim of the sky.” This is the one quoted by Emerson in “Parnassus.” Here is the concluding stanza: —

“Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;
A privacy of glorious light is thine,
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
Of harmony, with instinct more divine;
Type of the wise, who soar, but never roam,
True to the kindred points of heaven and home.”

The other poem I give entire:—

“Up with me! up with me into the clouds!
For thy song, Lark, is strong;

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Up with me, up with me into the clouds!
Singing, singing,
With clouds and sky about thee ringing,
Lift me, guide me till I find
That spot which seems so to thy mind!

“I have walked through wilderness dreary,
And to-day my heart is weary;
Had I now the wings of a Faery
Up to thee would I fly.
There is madness about thee, and joy divine
In that song of thine;
Lift me, guide me high and high
To thy banqueting-place in the sky.

“Joyous as morning
Thou art laughing and scorning;
Thou hast a nest for thy love and thy rest,
And, though little troubled with sloth,
Drunken Lark! thou wouldst be loth
To be such a traveler as I.

Happy, happy Liver!
With a soul as strong as a mountain river,
Pouring out praise to the Almighty Giver,
Joy and jollity be with us both!

“Alas! my journey, rugged and uneven,
Through prickly moors or dusty ways must wind;
But hearing thee, or others of thy kind,
As full of gladness and as free of heaven,
I, with my fate contented, will plod on,
And hope for higher raptures, when life's day is done.”

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But better than either — better and more than a hundred pages — is Shakespeare's simple line, —

“Hark, hark, the lark at heaven's gate sings,”

or John Lyly's, his contemporary, —

“Who is't now we hear ?

None but the lark so shrill and clear;

Now at heaven's gate she claps her wings,

The morn not waking till she sings.”

We have no well-known pastoral bird in the Eastern States that answers to the skylark. The American pipit or titlark and the shore lark, both birds of the far north, and seen in the States only in fall and winter, are said to sing on the wing in a similar strain. Common enough in our woods are two birds that have many of the habits and manners of the lark, — the water-thrush and the golden-crowned thrush, or oven-bird. They are both walkers, and the latter frequently sings on the wing up aloft after the manner of the lark. Starting from its low perch, it rises in a spiral flight far above the tallest trees, and breaks out in a clear, ringing, ecstatic song, sweeter and more richly modulated than the skylark's, but brief, ceasing almost before you have noticed it; whereas the skylark goes singing away after you have forgotten him and returned to him half a dozen times.

But on the Great Plains of the West there is a

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bird whose song resembles the skylark's quite closely and is said to be not at all inferior. This is Sprague's pipit, sometimes called the Missouri skylark, an excelsior songster, which from far up in the transparent blue rains down its notes for many minutes together. It is, no doubt, destined to figure in the future poetical literature of the West.

Throughout the northern and eastern parts of the Union the lark would find a dangerous rival in the bobolink, a bird that has no European prototype, and no near relatives anywhere, standing quite alone, unique, and, in the qualities of hilarity and musical tintinnabulation, with a song unequaled. He has already a secure place in general literature, having been laureated by no less a poet than Bryant, and invested with a lasting human charm in the sunny page of Irving, and is the only one of our songsters, I believe, that the mockingbird cannot parody or imitate. He affords the most marked example of exuberant pride, and a glad, rollicking, holiday spirit, that can be seen among our birds. Every note expresses complacency and glee. He is a beau of the first pattern, and, unlike any other bird of my acquaintance, pushes his gallantry to the point of wheeling gayly into the train of every female that comes along, even after the season of courtship is over and the matches are all settled; and when she leads him on too wild a chase, he turns lightly about and breaks out with a song that

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is precisely analogous to a burst of gay and self-satisfied laughter, as much as to say, "*Ha! ha! ha! I must have my fun, Miss Silverthimble, thimble, thimble, if I break every heart in the meadow, see, see, see!*"

At the approach of the breeding season the bobolink undergoes a complete change; his form changes, his color changes, his flight changes. From mottled brown or brindle he becomes black and white, earning, in some localities, the shocking name of "skunk bird;" his small, compact form becomes broad and conspicuous, and his ordinary flight is laid aside for a mincing, affected gait, in which he seems to use only the very tips of his wings. It is very noticeable what a contrast he presents to his mate at this season, not only in color but in manners, she being as shy and retiring as he is forward and hilarious. Indeed, she seems disagreeably serious and indisposed to any fun or jollity, scurrying away at his approach, and apparently annoyed at every endearing word and look. It is surprising that all this parade of plumage and tinkling of cymbals should be gone through with and persisted in to please a creature so coldly indifferent as she really seems to be. If Robert O'Lincoln has been stimulated into acquiring this holiday uniform and this musical gift by the approbation of Mrs. Robert, as Darwin, with his sexual selection principle, would have us believe, then there must have been a time

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when the females of this tribe were not quite so chary of their favors as they are now. Indeed, I never knew a female bird of any kind that did not appear utterly indifferent to the charms of voice and plumage that the male birds are so fond of displaying. But I am inclined to believe that the males think only of themselves and of outshining each other, and not at all of the approbation of their mates, as, in an analogous case in a higher species, it is well known whom the females dress for, and whom they want to kill with envy !

I know of no other song-bird that expresses so much self-consciousness and vanity, and comes so near being an ornithological coxcomb. The red-bird, the yellowbird, the indigo-bird, the oriole, the cardinal grosbeak, and others, all birds of brilliant plumage and musical ability, seem quite unconscious of self, and neither by tone nor act challenge the admiration of the beholder.

By the time the bobolink reaches the Potomac, in September, he has degenerated into a game-bird that is slaughtered by tens of thousands in the marshes. I think the prospects now are of his gradual extermination, as gunners and sportsmen are clearly on the increase, while the limit of the bird's productivity in the North has no doubt been reached long ago. There are no more meadows to be added to his domain there, while he is being waylaid and cut off more and more on his return to

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the South. It is gourmand eat gourmand, until in half a century more I expect the blithest and merriest of our meadow songsters will have disappeared before the rapacity of human throats.

But the poets have had a shot at him in good time, and have preserved some of his traits. Bryant's poem on this subject does not compare with his lines "To a Water-Fowl," — a subject so well suited to the peculiar, simple, and deliberate motion of his mind; at the same time it is fit that the poet who sings of "The Planting of the Apple-Tree" should render into words the song of "Robert of Lincoln." I subjoin a few stanzas: —

ROBERT OF LINCOLN

Merrily swinging on brier and weed,
Near to the nest of his little dame,
Over the mountain-side or mead,
Robert of Lincoln is telling his name:
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink:
Snug and safe is that nest of ours,
Hidden among the summer flowers.
Chee, chee, chee.

Robert of Lincoln is gayly drest,
Wearing a bright black wedding-coat,
White are his shoulders and white his crest,
Hear him call in his merry note:

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Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink:
Look what a nice new coat is mine,
Sure there was never a bird so fine.
Chee, chee, chee.

Robert of Lincoln's Quaker wife,
Pretty and quiet, with plain brown wings,
Passing at home a patient life,
Broods in the grass while her husband sings.
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink:
Brood, kind creature; you need not fear
Thieves and robbers while I am here.
Chee, chee, chee.

But it has been reserved for a practical ornithologist, Mr. Wilson Flagg, to write by far the best poem on the bobolink that I have yet seen. It is much more in the mood and spirit of the actual song than Bryant's poem: —

THE O'LINCOLN FAMILY

A flock of merry singing-birds were sporting in the
grove;
Some were warbling cheerily, and some were making
love:
There were Bobolincon, Wadolincon, Winterseeble, Con-
quedle, —
A livelier set was never led by tabor, pipe, or fiddle, —

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Crying, "Phew, shew, Wadolincon, see, see, Bobolincon,

Down among the tickletops, hiding in the buttercups!
I know the saucy chap, I see his shining cap
Bobbing in the clover there — see, see, see!"

Up flies Bobolincon, perching on an apple-tree,
Startled by his rival's song, quickened by his raillery,
Soon he spies the rogue afloat, curveting in the air,
And merrily he turns about, and warns him to beware!
"Tis you that would a-wooing go, down among the
rushes O!

But wait a week, till flowers are cheery, — wait a week,
and, ere you marry,

Be sure of a house wherein to tarry!

Wadolink, Whiskodink, Tom Denny, wait, wait, wait!"

Every one 's a funny fellow; every one 's a little mellow;
Follow, follow, follow, o'er the hill and in the hollow!

Merrily, merrily, there they hie; now they rise and now
they fly;

They cross and turn, and in and out, and down in the
middle, and wheel about, —

With a "Phew, shew, Wadolincon! listen to me, Bobolincon! —

Happy 's the wooing that 's speedily doing, that 's speedily
doing,

That 's merry and over with the bloom of the clover!

Bobolincon, Wadolincon, Wintersecble, follow, follow
me!"

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Many persons, I presume, have admired Wordsworth's poem on the cuckoo, without recognizing its truthfulness, or how thoroughly, in the main, the description applies to our own species. If the poem had been written in New England or New York, it could not have suited our case better:—

“O blithe New-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice,
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?

“While I am lying on the grass,
Thy twofold shout I hear,
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off, and near.

“Though babbling only to the Vale,
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

“Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery;

“The same whom in my schoolboy days
I listened to; that Cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky.

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“To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green;
And thou wert still a hope, a love;
Still longed for, never seen.

“And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

“O blessèd Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faery place;
That is fit home for thee!”

Logan's stanzas, “To the Cuckoo,” have less merit both as poetry and natural history, but they are older, and doubtless the latter poet benefited by them. Burke admired them so much that, while on a visit to Edinburgh, he sought the author out to compliment him: —

“Hail, beauteous stranger of the grove!
Thou messenger of spring!
Now Heaven repairs thy rural seat,
And woods thy welcome sing.

“What time the daisy decks the green,
Thy certain voice we hear;
Hast thou a star to guide thy path,
Or mark the rolling year?

.

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“The schoolboy, wandering through the wood
To pull the primrose gay,
Starts, the new voice of spring to hear,
And imitates thy lay.

“Sweet bird! thy bower is ever green,
Thy sky is ever clear;
Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,
No winter in thy year.”

The European cuckoo is evidently a much gayer bird than ours, and much more noticeable.

“Hark, how the jolly cuckoos sing
‘Cuckoo!’ to welcome in the spring,”

says John Lyly three hundred years ago. Its note is easily imitated, and boys will render it so perfectly as to deceive any but the shrewdest ear. An English lady tells me its voice reminds one of children at play, and is full of gayety and happiness. It is a persistent songster, and keeps up its call from morning to night. Indeed, certain parts of Wordsworth's poem — those that refer to the bird as a mystery, a wandering, solitary voice — seem to fit our bird better than the European species. Our cuckoo is in fact a solitary wanderer, repeating its loud, guttural call in the depths of the forest, and well calculated to arrest the attention of a poet like Wordsworth, who was himself a kind of cuckoo, a solitary voice, syllabing the loneliness that broods over streams and woods, —

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“And once far off, and near.”

Our cuckoo is not a spring bird, being seldom seen or heard in the North before late in May. He is a great devourer of canker-worms, and, when these pests appear, he comes out of his forest seclusion and makes excursions through the orchards stealthily and quietly, regaling himself upon those pulpy, fuzzy titbits. His coat of deep cinnamon brown has a silky gloss and is very beautiful. His note or call is not musical but loud, and has in a remarkable degree the quality of remoteness and introvertedness. It is like a vocal legend, and to the farmer bodes rain.

It is worthy of note, and illustrates some things said farther back, that birds not strictly denominated songsters, but criers like the cuckoo, have been quite as great favorites with the poets, and have received as affectionate treatment at their hands, as have the song-birds. One readily recalls Emerson's "Titmouse," Trowbridge's "Pewee," Celia Thaxter's "Sandpiper," and others of a like character.

It is also worthy of note that the owl appears to be a greater favorite with the poets than the proud, soaring hawk. The owl is doubtless the more human and picturesque bird; then he belongs to the night and its weird effects. Bird of the silent wing and expansive eye, grimalkin in feathers, feline, mousing, haunting ruins and towers, and mock-

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ing the midnight stillness with thy uncanny cry!
The owl is the great bugaboo of the feathered tribes. His appearance by day is hailed by shouts of alarm and derision from nearly every bird that flies, from crows down to sparrows. They swarm about him like flies, and literally mob him back into his dusky retreat. Silence is as the breath of his nostrils to him, and the uproar that greets him when he emerges into the open day seems to alarm and confuse him as it does the pickpocket when everybody cries Thief.

But the poets, I say, have not despised him: —

“The lark is but a bumpkin fowl;
He sleeps in his nest till morn;
But my blessing upon the jolly owl
That all night blows his horn.”

Both Shakespeare and Tennyson have made songs about him. This is Shakespeare's, from “Love's Labor's Lost,” and perhaps has reference to the white or snowy owl: —

“When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail;
When blood is nipped and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
Tu-whoo!

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Tu-whit! tu-whoo! a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

“When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson’s saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian’s nose looks red and raw;
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
Tu-whoo!
Tu-whit! Tu-whoo! a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.”

There is, perhaps, a slight reminiscence of this song
in Tennyson’s “Owl : ” —

“When cats run home and light is come,
And dew is cold upon the ground,
And the far-off stream is dumb,
And the whirring sail goes round,
And the whirring sail goes round;
Alone and warming his five wits,
The white owl in the belfry sits.

“When merry milkmaids click the latch,
And rarely smells the new-mown hay,
And the cock hath sung beneath the thatch
Twice or thrice his roundelay,
Twice or thrice his roundelay;
Alone and warming his five wits,
The white owl in the belfry sits.”

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Tennyson has not directly celebrated any of the more famous birds, but his poems contain frequent allusions to them. The

“Wild bird, whose warble, liquid sweet,
Rings Eden through the budded quicks,
Oh, tell me where the senses mix,
Oh, tell me where the passions meet,”

of “In Memoriam,” is doubtless the nightingale. And here we have the lark: —

“Now sings the woodland loud and long,
And distance takes a lovelier hue,
And drowned in yonder living blue
The lark becomes a sightless song.”

And again in this from “A Dream of Fair Women:” —

“Then I heard
A noise of some one coming through the lawn,
And singing clearer than the crested bird
That claps his wings at dawn.”

The swallow is a favorite bird with Tennyson, and is frequently mentioned, beside being the principal figure in one of those charming love-songs in “The Princess.” His allusions to the birds, as to any other natural feature, show him to be a careful observer, as when he speaks of

“The swamp, where hums the dropping snipe.”

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His single bird-poem, aside from the song I have quoted, is "The Blackbird," the Old World prototype of our robin, as if our bird had doffed the aristocratic black for a more democratic suit on reaching these shores. In curious contrast to the color of its plumage is its beak, which is as yellow as a kernel of Indian corn. The following are the two middle stanzas of the poem: —

"Yet, though I spared thee all the spring,
Thy sole delight is, sitting still,
With that gold dagger of thy bill
To fret the summer jenneting.

"A golden bill! the silver tongue
Cold February loved is dry;
Plenty corrupts the melody
That made thee famous once, when young."

Shakespeare, in one of his songs, alludes to the blackbird as the ouzel-cock; indeed, he puts quite a flock of birds in this song: —

"The ouzel-cock so black of hue,
With orange tawny bill;
The throstle with his note so true,
The wren with little quill;
The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The plain song cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
And dares not answer nay."

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So far as external appearances are concerned, — form, plumage, grace of manner, — no one ever had a less promising subject than had Trowbridge in the “Pewee.” This bird, if not the plainest dressed, is the most unshapely in the woods. It is stiff and abrupt in its manners and sedentary in its habits, sitting around all day, in the dark recesses of the woods, on the dry twigs and branches, uttering now and then its plaintive cry, and “with many a flirt and flutter” snapping up its insect game.

The pewee belongs to quite a large family of birds, all of whom have strong family traits, and who are not the most peaceable and harmonious of the sylvan folk. They are pugnacious, harsh-voiced, angular in form and movement, with flexible tails and broad, flat, bristling beaks that stand to the face at the angle of a turn-up nose, and most of them wear a black cap pulled well down over their eyes. Their heads are large, neck and legs short, and elbows sharp. The wild Irishman of them all is the great crested flycatcher, a large, leather-colored or sandy-complexioned bird that prowls through the woods, uttering its harsh, uncanny note and waging fierce warfare upon its fellows.

The exquisite of the family, and the braggart of the orchard, is the kingbird, a bully that loves to strip the feathers off its more timid neighbors such as the bluebird, that feeds on the stingless bees of the hive, the drones, and earns the reputation of

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great boldness by teasing large hawks, while it gives a wide berth to little ones.

The best beloved of them all is the phœbe-bird, one of the firstlings of the spring, of whom so many of our poets have made affectionate mention.

The wood pewee is the sweetest voiced, and, notwithstanding the ungracious things I have said of it and of its relations, merits to the full all Trowbridge's pleasant fancies. His poem is indeed a very careful study of the bird and its haunts, and is good poetry as well as good ornithology: —

“The listening Dryads hushed the woods;
The boughs were thick, and thin and few
The golden ribbons fluttering through;
Their sun-embroidered, leafy hoods
The lindens lifted to the blue;
Only a little forest-brook
The farthest hem of silence shook;
When in the hollow shades I heard —
Was it a spirit or a bird?
Or, strayed from Eden, desolate,
Some Peri calling to her mate,
Whom nevermore her mate would cheer?
‘Pe-ri! pe-ri! peer!’

.
“To trace it in its green retreat
I sought among the boughs in vain;
And followed still the wandering strain,
So melancholy and so sweet,

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The dim-eyed violets yearned with pain.
'T was now a sorrow in the air,
Some nymph's immortalized despair
Haunting the woods and waterfalls;
And now, at long, sad intervals,
Sitting unseen in dusky shade,
His plaintive pipe some fairy played,
With long-drawn cadence thin and clear, —
'Pe-wee! pe-wee! peer!'

⁵⁶Long-drawn and clear its closes were —
As if the hand of Music through
The sombre robe of Silence drew
A thread of golden gossamer;
So pure a flute the fairy blew.
Like beggared princes of the wood,
In silver rags the birches stood;
The hemlocks, lordly counselors,
Were dumb; the sturdy servitors,
In beechen jackets patched and gray,
Seemed waiting spellbound all the day
That low, entrancing note to hear, —
'Pe-wee! pe-wee! peer!'

⁵⁶I quit the search, and sat me down
Beside the brook, irresolute,
And watched a little bird in suit
Of sober olive, soft and brown,
Perched in the maple branches, mute;
With greenish gold its vest was fringed,

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Its tiny cap was ebon-tinged,
With ivory pale its wings were barred,
And its dark eyes were tender-starred.
"Dear bird," I said, "what is thy name?"
And thrice the mournful answer came,
So faint and far, and yet so near, —
'Pe-wee! pe-wee! peer!'

"For so I found my forest bird, —
The pewee of the loneliest woods,
Sole singer in these solitudes,
Which never robin's whistle stirred,
Where never bluebird's plume intrudes.
Quick darting through the dewy morn,
The redstart trilled his twittering horn
And vanished in thick boughs; at even,
Like liquid pearls fresh showered from heaven,
The high notes of the lone wood thrush
Fell on the forest's holy hush;
But thou all day complainest here, —
'Pe-wee! pe-wee! peer!'"

Emerson's best natural history poem is the "Humble-Bee," — a poem as good in its way as Burns's poem on the mouse; but his later poem, "The Titmouse," has many of the same qualities, and cannot fail to be acceptable to both poet and naturalist.

The chickadee is indeed a truly Emersonian bird, and the poet shows him to be both a hero and a philosopher. Hardy, active, social, a winter bird

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no less than a summer, a defier of both frost and heat, lover of the pine-tree, and diligent searcher after truth in the shape of eggs and larvæ of insects, preëminently a New England bird, clad in black and ashen gray, with a note the most cheering and reassuring to be heard in our January woods, — I know of none other of our birds so well calculated to captivate the Emersonian muse.

Emerson himself is a northern hyperborean genius, — a winter bird with a clear, saucy, cheery call, and not a passionate summer songster. His lines have little melody to the ear, but they have the vigor and distinctness of all pure and compact things. They are like the needles of the pine — “the snow loving pine” — more than the emotional foliage of the deciduous trees, and the titmouse becomes them well: —

“Up and away for life! be fleet! —
The frost-king ties my fumbling feet,
Sings in my ears, my hands are stones,
Curdles the blood to the marble bones,
Tugs at the heart-strings, numbs the sense,
And hems in life with narrowing fence.
Well, in this broad bed lie and sleep, —
The punctual stars will vigil keep, —
Embalmed by purifying cold;
The wind shall sing their dead march old,
The snow is no ignoble shroud,
The moon thy mourner, and the cloud.

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“Softly, — but this way fate was pointing,
’T was coming fast to such anointing,
When piped a tiny voice hard by,
Gay and polite, a cheerful cry,
Chick-chickadeedee! saucy note,
Out of sound heart and merry throat,
As if it said ‘Good day, good sir!
Fine afternoon, old passenger!
Happy to meet you in these places,
Where January brings few faces.’

“This poet, though he lived apart,
Moved by his hospitable heart,
Sped, when I passed his sylvan fort,
To do the honors of his court,
As fits a feathered lord of land;
Flew near, with soft wing grazed my hand,
Hopped on the bough, then darting low,
Prints his small impress on the snow,
Shows feats of his gymnastic play,
Head downward, clinging to the spray.

“Here was this atom in full breath,
Hurling defiance at vast death;
This scrap of valor just for play
Fronts the north-wind in waistcoat gray,
As if to shame my weak behavior;
I greeted loud my little savior,
‘You pet! what dost here? and what for?
In these woods, thy small Labrador,
At this pinch, wee San Salvador!

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What fire burns in that little chest,
So frolic, stout, and self-possess?
Henceforth I wear no stripe but thine;
Ashes and jet all hues outshine.
Why are not diamonds black and gray,
To ape thy dare-devil array?
And I affirm, the spacious North
Exists to draw thy virtue forth.
I think no virtue goes with size;
The reason of all cowardice
Is, that men are overgrown,
And, to be valiant, must come down
To the titmouse dimension.'

"I think old Cæsar must have heard
In northern Gaul my dauntless bird,
And, echoed in some frosty wold,
Borrowed thy battle-numbers bold.
And I will write our annals new
And thank thee for a better clew.
I, who dreamed not when I came here
To find the antidote of fear,
Now hear thee say in Roman key,
Pæan ! Veni, vidi, vici."

A late bird-poem, and a good one of its kind, is Celia Thaxter's "Sandpiper," which recalls Bryant's "Water-Fowl" in its successful rendering of the spirit and atmosphere of the scene, and the distinctness with which the lone bird, flitting along the beach, is brought before the mind. It is a woman's

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or a feminine poem, as Bryant's is characteristically a man's.

The sentiment or feeling awakened by any of the aquatic fowls is preëminently one of loneliness. The wood duck which your approach starts from the pond or the marsh, the loon neighing down out of the April sky, the wild goose, the curlew, the stork, the bittern, the sandpiper, awaken quite a different train of emotions from those awakened by the land-birds. They all have clinging to them some reminiscence and suggestion of the sea. Their cries echo its wildness and desolation ; their wings are the shape of its billows.

Of the sandpipers there are many varieties, found upon the coast and penetrating inland along the rivers and water-courses, one of the most interesting of the family, commonly called the "tip-up," going up all the mountain brooks and breeding in the sand along their banks; but the characteristics are the same in all, and the eye detects little difference except in size.

The walker on the beach sees it running or flitting before him, following up the breakers and picking up the aquatic insects left on the sands; and the trout-fisher along the farthest inland stream likewise intrudes upon its privacy. Flitting along from stone to stone seeking its food, the hind part of its body "teetering" up and down, its soft gray color blending it with the pebbles and the rocks, or

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else skimming up or down the stream on its long, convex wings, uttering its shrill cry, the sandpiper is not a bird of the sea merely; and Mrs. Thaxter's poem is as much for the dweller inland as for the dweller upon the coast: —

THE SANDPIPER

Across the narrow beach we flit,
One little sandpiper and I;
And fast I gather, bit by bit,
The scattered driftwood bleached and dry.
The wild waves reach their hands for it,
The wild wind raves, the tide runs high,
As up and down the beach we flit, —
One little sandpiper and I.

Above our heads the sullen clouds
Scud black and swift across the sky;
Like silent ghosts in misty shrouds
Stand out the white lighthouses high.
Almost as far as eye can reach
I see the close-reefed vessels fly,
As fast we flit along the beach, —
One little sandpiper and I.

I watch him as he skims along,
Uttering his sweet and mournful cry;
He starts not at my fitful song,
Or flash of fluttering drapery;

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He has no thought of any wrong;
He scans me with a fearless eye.
Stanch friends are we, well tried and strong,
The little sandpiper and I.

Comrade, where wilt thou be to-night
When the loosed storm breaks furiously?
My driftwood fire will burn so bright!
To what warm shelter canst thou fly?
I do not fear for thee, though wroth
The tempest rushes through the sky;
For are we not God's children both,
Thou, little sandpiper, and I?

Others of our birds have been game for the poetic muse, but in most cases the poets have had some moral or pretty conceit to convey, and have not loved the bird first. Mr. Lathrop preaches a little in his pleasant poem, "The Sparrow," but he must some time have looked upon the bird with genuine emotion to have written the first two stanzas: —

"Glimmers gay the leafless thicket
Close beside my garden gate,
Where, so light, from post to wicket,
Hops the sparrow, blithe, sedate;
Who, with meekly folded wing,
Comes to sun himself and sing.

"It was there, perhaps, last year,
That his little house he built;

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For he seems to perk and peer,
And to twitter, too, and tilt
The bare branches in between,
With a fond, familiar mien."

The bluebird has not been overlooked, and Halleck, Longfellow, and Mrs. Sigourney have written poems upon him, but from none of them does there fall that first note of his in early spring, — a note that may be called the violet of sound, and as welcome to the ear, heard above the cold, damp earth; as is its floral type to the eye a few weeks later Lowell's two lines come nearer the mark: —

"The bluebird, shifting his light load of song
From post to post along the cheerless fence."

Or the first swallow that comes twittering up the southern valley, laughing a gleeful, childish laugh, and awakening such memories in the heart, who has put him in a poem? So the hummingbird, too, escapes through the finest meshes of rhyme.

The most melodious of our songsters, the wood thrush and the hermit thrush, — birds whose strains, more than any others, express harmony and serenity, — have not yet, that I am aware, had reared to them their merited poetic monument, unless, indeed, Whitman has done this service for the hermit thrush in his "President Lincoln's Burial Hymn." Here the threnody is blent of three chords, the

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blossoming lilac, the evening star, and the hermit thrush, the latter playing the most prominent part throughout the composition. It is the exalting and spiritual utterance of the "solitary singer" that calms and consoles the poet when the powerful shock of the President's assassination comes upon him, and he flees from the stifling atmosphere and offensive lights and conversation of the house, —

"Forth to hiding, receiving night that talks not,
Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp
in the dinness,
To the solemn shadowy cedars and ghostly pines so still."

Numerous others of our birds would seem to challenge attention by their calls and notes. There is the Maryland yellowthroat, for instance, standing in the door of his bushy tent, and calling out as you approach, "*which way, sir ! which way, sir !*" If he says this to the ear of common folk, what would he not say to the poet? One of the peewees says "*stay there !*" with great emphasis. The cardinal grosbeak calls out "*what cheer,*" "*what cheer ;*" the bluebird says "*purity,*" "*purity,*" "*purity ;*" the brown thrasher, or ferruginous thrush, according to Thoreau, calls out to the farmer planting his corn, "*drop it,*" "*drop it,*" "*cover it up,*" "*cover it up.*" The yellow-breasted chat says "*who,*" "*who,*" and "*tea-boy.*" What the robin says, caroling that simple strain from the top

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of the tall maple, or the crow with his hardy *haw-haw*, or the pedestrain meadowlark sounding his piercing and long-drawn note in the spring meadows, the poets ought to be able to tell us. I only know the birds all have a language which is very expressive, and which is easily translatable into the human tongue.

II

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I

WHEREVER Nature has commissioned one creature to prey upon another, she has preserved the balance by forewarning that other creature of what she has done. Nature says to the cat, "Catch the mouse," and she equips her for that purpose; but on the selfsame day she says to the mouse, "Be wary, — the cat is watching for you." Nature takes care that none of her creatures have smooth sailing, the whole voyage at least. Why has she not made the mosquito noiseless and its bite itchless? Simply because in that case the odds would be too greatly in its favor. She has taken especial pains to enable the owl to fly softly and silently, because the creatures it preys upon are small and wary, and never venture far from their holes. She has not shown the same caution in the case of the crow, because the crow feeds on dead flesh, or on grubs and beetles, or fruit and grain, that do not need to be approached stealthily. The big fish love to eat up the little fish, and the little fish know it,

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and, on the very day they are hatched, seek shallow water, and put little sandbars between themselves and their too loving parents.

How easily a bird's tail, or that of any fowl, or in fact any part of the plumage, comes out when the hold of its would-be capturer is upon this alone; and how hard it yields in the dead bird! No doubt there is relaxation in the former case. Nature says to the pursuer, "Hold on," and to the pursued, "Let your tail go." What is the tortuous, zigzag course of those slow-flying moths for but to make it difficult for the birds to snap them up? The skunk is a slow, witless creature, and the fox and lynx love its meat; yet it carries a bloodless weapon that neither likes to face.

I recently heard of an ingenious method a certain other simple and slow-going creature has of baffling its enemy. A friend of mine was walking in the fields when he saw a commotion in the grass a few yards off. Approaching the spot, he found a snake — the common garter snake — trying to swallow a lizard. And how do you suppose the lizard was defeating the benevolent designs of the snake? By simply taking hold of its own tail and making itself into a hoop. The snake went round and round, and could find neither beginning nor end. Who was the old giant that found himself wrestling with Time? This little snake had a tougher customer the other day in the bit of eternity it was trying to swallow.

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The snake itself has not the same wit, because I lately saw a black snake in the woods trying to swallow the garter snake, and he had made some headway, though the little snake was fighting every inch of the ground, hooking his tail about sticks and bushes, and pulling back with all his might, apparently not liking the look of things down there at all. I thought it well to let him have a good taste of his own doctrines, when I put my foot down against further proceedings.

This arming of one creature against another is often cited as an evidence of the wisdom of Nature, but it is rather an evidence of her impartiality. She does not care a fig more for one creature than for another, and is equally on the side of both, or perhaps it would be better to say she does not care a fig for either. Every creature must take its chances, and man is no exception. We can ride if we know how and are going her way, or we can be run over if we fall or make a mistake. Nature does not care whether the hunter slay the beast or the beast the hunter; she will make good compost of them both, and her ends are prospered whichever succeeds.

“If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.”

What is the end of Nature? Where is the end

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of a sphere? The sphere balances at any and every point. So everything in Nature is at the top, and yet no *one* thing is at the top.

She works with reference to no measure of time, no limit of space, and with an abundance of material, not expressed by exhaustless. Did you think Niagara a great exhibition of power? What is that, then, that withdraws noiseless and invisible in the ground about, and of which Niagara is but the lifting of the finger?

Nature is thoroughly selfish, and looks only to her own ends. One thing she is bent upon, and that is keeping up the supply, multiplying endlessly and scattering as she multiplies. Did Nature have in view our delectation when she made the apple, the peach, the plum, the cherry? Undoubtedly; but only as a means to her own private ends. What a bribe or a wage is the pulp of these delicacies to all creatures to come and sow their seed! And Nature has taken care to make the seed indigestible, so that, though the fruit be eaten, the germ is not, but only planted.

God made the crab, but man made the pippin; but the pippin cannot propagate itself, and exists only by violence and usurpation. Bacon says, "It is easier to deceive Nature than to force her," but it seems to me the nurserymen really force her. They cut off the head of a savage and clap on the head of a fine gentleman, and the crab becomes a

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Swaar or a Baldwin. Or is it a kind of deception practiced upon Nature, which succeeds only by being carefully concealed? If we could play the same tricks upon her in the human species, how the great geniuses could be preserved and propagated, and the world stocked with them! But what a frightful condition of things that would be! No new men, but a tiresome and endless repetition of the old ones, — a world perpetually stocked with Newtons and Shakespeares!

We say Nature knows best, and has adapted this or that to our wants or to our constitution, — sound to the ear, light and color to the eye; but she has not done any such thing, but has adapted man to these things. The physical cosmos is the mould, and man is the molten metal that is poured into it. The light fashioned the eye, the laws of sound made the ear; in fact, man is the outcome of Nature and not the reverse. Creatures that live forever in the dark have no eyes; and would not any one of our senses perish and be shed, as it were, in a world where it could not be used?

II

It is well to let down our metropolitan pride a little. Man thinks himself at the top, and that the immense display and prodigality of Nature are for him. But they are no more for him than they are for the birds and beasts, and he is no more at the

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top than they are. He appeared upon the stage when the play had advanced to a certain point, and he will disappear from the stage when the play has reached another point, and the great drama will go on without him. The geological ages, the convulsions and parturition throes of the globe, were to bring him forth no more than the beetles. Is not all this wealth of the seasons, these solar and sidereal influences, this depth and vitality and internal fire, these seas, and rivers, and oceans, and atmospheric currents, as necessary to the life of the ants and worms we tread under foot as to our own? And does the sun shine for me any more than for yon butterfly? What I mean to say is, we cannot put our finger upon this or that and say, Here is the end of Nature. The Infinite cannot be measured. The plan of Nature is so immense, — but she has no plan, no scheme, but to go on and on forever. What is size, what is time, distance, to the Infinite? Nothing. The Infinite knows no time, no space, no great, no small, no beginning, no end.

I sometimes think that the earth and the worlds are a kind of nervous ganglia in an organization of which we can form no conception, or less even than that. If one of the globules of blood that circulate in our veins were magnified enough million times, we might see a globe teeming with life and power. Such is this earth of ours, coursing in the veins of the Infinite. Size is only relative, and

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the imagination finds no end to the series either way.

III

Looking out of the car window one day, I saw the pretty and unusual sight of an eagle sitting upon the ice in the river, surrounded by half a dozen or more crows. The crows appeared as if looking up to the noble bird and attending his movements. "Are those its young?" asked a gentleman by my side. How much did that man know — not about eagles, but about Nature? If he had been familiar with geese or hens, or with donkeys, he would not have asked that question. The ancients had an axiom that he who knew one truth knew all truths; so much else becomes knowable when one vital fact is thoroughly known. You have a key, a standard, and cannot be deceived. Chemistry, geology, astronomy, natural history, all admit one to the same measureless interiors.

I heard a great man say that he could see how much of the theology of the day would fall before the standard of him who had got even the insects. And let any one set about studying these creatures carefully, and he will see the force of the remark. We learn the tremendous doctrine of metamorphosis from the insect world; and have not the bee and the ant taught man wisdom from the first? I was highly edified the past summer by observing the

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ways and doings of a colony of black hornets that established themselves under one of the projecting gables of my house. This hornet has the reputation of being a very ugly customer, but I found it no trouble to live on the most friendly terms with her. She was as little disposed to quarrel as I was. She is indeed the eagle among hornets, and very noble and dignified in her bearing. She used to come freely into the house and prey upon the flies. You would hear that deep, mellow hum, and see the black falcon poising on wing, or striking here and there at the flies, that scattered on her approach like chickens before a hawk. When she had caught one, she would alight upon some object and proceed to dress and draw her game. The wings were sheared off, the legs cut away, the bristles trimmed, then the body thoroughly bruised and broken. When the work was completed, the fly was rolled up into a small pellet, and with it under her arm the hornet flew to her nest, where no doubt in due time it was properly served up on the royal board. Every dinner inside these paper walls is a state dinner, for the queen is always present.

I used to mount the ladder to within two or three feet of the nest and observe the proceedings. I at first thought the workshop must be inside, — a place where the pulp was mixed, and perhaps treated with chemicals; for each hornet, when she came with her burden of materials, passed into the

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nest, and then, after a few moments, emerged again and crawled to the place of building. But I one day stopped up the entrance with some cotton, when no one happened to be on guard, and then observed that, when the loaded hornet could not get inside, she, after some deliberation, proceeded to the unfinished part and went forward with her work. Hence I inferred that maybe the hornet went inside to report and to receive orders, or possibly to surrender her material into fresh hands. Her career when away from the nest is beset with dangers; the colony is never large, and the safe return of every hornet is no doubt a matter of solicitude to the royal mother.

The hornet was the first paper-maker, and holds the original patent. The paper it makes is about like that of the newspaper; nearly as firm, and made of essentially the same material, — woody fibres scraped from old rails and boards. And there is news on it, too, if one could make out the characters.

When I stopped the entrance with cotton, there was no commotion or excitement, as there would have been in the case of yellow-jackets. Those outside went to pulling, and those inside went to pushing and chewing. Only once did one of the outsiders come down and look me suspiciously in the face, and inquire very plainly what my business might be up there. I bowed my head, being at the

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top of a twenty-foot ladder, and had nothing to say.

The cotton was chewed and moistened about the edges till every fibre was loosened, when the mass dropped. But instantly the entrance was made smaller, and changed so as to make the feat of stopping it more difficult.

IV

There are those who look at Nature from the standpoint of conventional and artificial life,—from parlor windows and through gilt-edged poems,—the sentimentalists. At the other extreme are those who do not look at Nature at all, but are a grown part of her, and look away from her toward the other class,—the backwoodsmen and pioneers, and all rude and simple persons. Then there are those in whom the two are united or merged,—the great poets and artists. In them the sentimentalist is corrected and cured, and the hairy and taciturn frontiersman has had experience to some purpose. The true poet knows more about Nature than the naturalist because he carries her open secrets in his heart. Eckermann could instruct Goethe in ornithology, but could not Goethe instruct Eckermann in the meaning and mystery of the bird? It is my privilege to number among my friends a man who has passed his life in cities amid the throngs of men, who never goes to the woods or to the coun-

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try, or hunts or fishes, and yet he is the true naturalist. I think he studies the orbs. I think day and night and the stars, and the faces of men and women, have taught him all there is worth knowing.

We run to Nature because we are afraid of man. Our artists paint the landscape because they cannot paint the human face. If we could look into the eyes of a man as coolly as we can into the eyes of an animal, the products of our pens and brushes would be quite different from what they are.

V

But I suspect, after all, it makes but little difference to which school you go, whether to the woods or to the city. A sincere man learns pretty much the same things in both places. The differences are superficial, the resemblances deep and many. The hermit is a hermit, and the poet a poet, whether he grow up in the town or the country. I was forcibly reminded of this fact recently on opening the works of Charles Lamb after I had been reading those of our Henry Thoreau. Lamb cared nothing for nature, Thoreau for little else. One was as attached to the city and the life of the street and tavern as the other to the country and the life of animals and plants. Yet they are close akin. They give out the same tone and are pitched in about the same key. Their methods are the same; so are their quaintness and scorn of rhetoric. Thoreau

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has the drier humor, as might be expected, and is less stomachic. There is more juice and unction in Lamb, but this he owes to his nationality. Both are essayists who in a less reflective age would have been poets pure and simple. Both were spare, high-nosed men, and I fancy a resemblance even in their portraits. Thoreau is the Lamb of New England fields and woods, and Lamb is the Thoreau of London streets and clubs. There was a willfulness and perversity about Thoreau, behind which he concealed his shyness and his thin skin, and there was a similar foil in Lamb, though less marked, on account of his good-nature; that was a part of his armor, too.

VI

Speaking of Thoreau's dry humor reminds me how surely the old English unctuous and sympathetic humor is dying out or has died out of our literature. Our first notable crop of authors had it,—Paulding, Cooper, Irving, and in a measure Hawthorne,—but our later humorists have it not at all, but in its stead an intellectual quickness and perception of the ludicrous that is not unmingled with scorn.

One of the marks of the great humorist, like Cervantes, or Sterne, or Scott, is that he approaches his subject, not through his head merely, but through his heart, his love, his humanity. His

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humor is full of compassion, full of the milk of human kindness, and does not separate him from his subject, but unites him to it by vital ties. How Sterne loved Uncle Toby and sympathized with him, and Cervantes his luckless knight! I fear our humorists would have made fun of them, would have shown them up and stood aloof superior, and "laughed a laugh of merry scorn." Whatever else the great humorist or poet, or any artist, may be or do, there is no contempt in his laughter. And this point cannot be too strongly insisted on in view of the fact that nearly all our humorous writers seem impressed with the conviction that their own dignity and self-respect require them to *look down* upon what they portray. But it is only little men who look down upon anything or speak down to anybody.

One sees every day how clear it is that specially fine, delicate, intellectual persons cannot portray satisfactorily coarse, common, uncultured characters. Their attitude is at once scornful and supercilious. The great man, like Socrates, or Dr. Johnson, or Abraham Lincoln, is just as surely coarse as he is fine, but the complaint I make with our humorists is that they are fine and not coarse in any healthful and manly sense. A great part of the best literature and the best art is of the vital fluids, the bowels, the chest, the appetites, and is to be read and judged only through love and compassion. Let us pray for unction, which is the marrowfat of

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humor, and for humility, which is the badge of manhood.

As the voice of the American has retreated from his chest to his throat and nasal passages, so there is danger that his contribution to literature will soon cease to imply any blood or viscera, or healthful carnality, or depth of human and manly affection, and will be the fruit entirely of our toploftical brilliancy and cleverness.

What I complain of is just as true of the essayists and the critics as of the novelists. The prevailing tone here also is born of a feeling of immense superiority. How our lofty young men, for instance, look down upon Carlyle, and administer their masterly rebukes to him! But see how Carlyle treats Burns, or Scott, or Johnson, or Novalis, or any of his heroes. Ay, there's the rub; he makes heroes of them, which is not a trick of small natures. He can say of Johnson that he was "moonstruck," but it is from no lofty height of fancied superiority, but he uses the word as a naturalist uses a term to describe an object he loves.

What we want, and perhaps have got more of than I am ready to admit, is a race of writers who affiliate with their subjects, and enter into them through their blood, their sexuality and manliness, instead of standing apart and criticising them and writing *about* them through mere intellectual cleverness and "smartness."

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VII

There is a feeling in heroic poetry, or in a burst of eloquence, that I sometimes catch in quite different fields. I caught it this morning, for instance, when I saw the belated trains go by, and knew how they had been battling with storm, darkness, and distance, and had triumphed. They were due at my place in the night, but did not pass till after eight o'clock in the morning. Two trains coupled together, — the fast mail and the express, — making an immense line of coaches hauled by two engines. They had come from the West, and were all covered with snow and ice, like soldiers with the dust of battle upon them. They had massed their forces, and were now moving with augmented speed, and with a resolution that was epic and grand. Talk about the railroad dispelling the romance from the landscape; if it does, it brings the heroic element in. The moving train is a proud spectacle, especially on stormy and tempestuous nights. When I look out and see its light, steady and unflickering as the planets, and hear the roar of its advancing tread, or its sound diminishing in the distance, I am comforted and made stout of heart. O night, where is thy stay! O space, where is thy victory! Or to see the fast mail pass in the morning is as good as a page of Homer. It quickens one's pulse for all day. It is the Ajax of trains. I hear its defiant, warning

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whistle, hear it thunder over the bridges, and its sharp, rushing ring among the rocks, and in the winter mornings see its glancing, meteoric lights, or in summer its white form bursting through the silence and the shadows, its plume of smoke lying flat upon its roofs and stretching far behind, — a sight better than a battle. It is something of the same feeling one has in witnessing any wild, free careering in storms, and in floods in nature; or in beholding the charge of an army; or in listening to an eloquent man, or to a hundred instruments of music in full blast, — it is triumph, victory. What is eloquence but mass in motion, — a flood, a cataract, an express train, a cavalry charge? We are literally carried away, swept from our feet, and recover our senses again as best we can.

I experienced the same emotion when I saw them go by with the sunken steamer. The procession moved slowly and solemnly. It was like a funeral cortège, — a long line of grim floats and barges and boxes, with their bowed and solemn derricks, the pall-bearers; and underneath in her watery grave, where she had been for six months, the sunken steamer, partially lifted and borne along. Next day the procession went back again, and the spectacle was still more eloquent. The steamer had been taken to the flats above and raised till her walking-beam was out of water; her bell also was exposed and cleaned and rung, and the wreckers' Herculean

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labor seemed nearly over. But that night the winds and the storms held high carnival. It looked like preconcerted action on the part of tide, tempest, and rain to defeat these wreckers, for the elements all pulled together and pulled till cables and hawser snapped like threads. Back the procession started, anchors were dragged or lost, immense new cables were quickly taken ashore and fastened to trees; but no use: trees were upturned, the cables stretched till they grew small and sang like harp-strings, then parted; back, back against the desperate efforts of the men, till within a few feet of her old grave, when there was a great commotion among the craft, floats were overturned, enormous chains parted, colossal timbers were snapped like pipestems, and, with a sound that filled all the air, the steamer plunged to the bottom again in seventy feet of water.

VIII

I am glad to observe that all the poetry of the midsummer harvesting has not gone out with the scythe and the whetstone. The line of mowers was a pretty sight, if one did not sympathize too deeply with the human backs turned up there to the sun, and the sound of the whetstone, coming up from the meadows in the dewy morning, was pleasant music. But I find the sound of the mowing-machine and the patent reaper is even more in tune with the

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voices of Nature at this season. The characteristic sounds of midsummer are the sharp, whirring crescendo of the cicada or harvest fly, and the rasping, stridulous notes of the nocturnal insects. The mowing-machine repeats and imitates these sounds. 'T is like the hum of a locust or the shuffling of a mighty grasshopper. More than that, the grass and the grain at this season have become hard. The timothy stalk is like a file; the rye straw is glazed with flint; the grasshoppers snap sharply as they fly up in front of you; the bird-songs have ceased; the ground crackles under foot; the eye of day is brassy and merciless; and in harmony with all these things is the rattle of the mower and the hay-tedder.

IX

'T is an evidence of how directly we are related to Nature, that we more or less sympathize with the weather, and take on the color of the day. Goethe said he worked easiest on a high barometer. One is like a chimney that draws well some days and won't draw at all on others, and the secret is mainly in the condition of the atmosphere. Anything positive and decided with the weather is a good omen. A pouring rain may be more auspicious than a sleeping sunshine. When the stove draws well, the fogs and fumes will leave your mind.

I find there is great virtue in the bare ground, and have been much put out at times by those white

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angelic days we have in winter, such as Whittier has so well described in these lines: —

“Around the glistening wonder bent
The blue walls of the firmament;
No cloud above, no earth below,
A universe of sky and snow.”

On such days my spirit gets snow-blind; all things take on the same color, or no color; my thought loses its perspective; the inner world is a blank like the outer, and all my great ideals are wrapped in the same monotonous and expressionless commonplace. The blackest of black days are better.

Why does snow so kill the landscape and blot out our interest in it? Not merely because it is cold, and the symbol of death, — for I imagine as many inches of apple blossoms would have about the same effect, — but because it expresses nothing. White is a negative; a perfect blank. The eye was made for color, and for the earthy tints, and, when these are denied it, the mind is very apt to sympathize and to suffer also.

Then when the sap begins to mount in the trees, and the spring languor comes, does not one grow restless indoors? The sun puts out the fire, the people say, and the spring sun certainly makes one's intellectual light grow dim. Why should not a man sympathize with the seasons and the moods and

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phases of Nature? He is an apple upon this tree, or rather he is a babe at this breast, and what his great mother feels affects him also.

X

I have frequently been surprised, in late fall and early winter, to see how unequal or irregular was the encroachment of the frost upon the earth. If there is suddenly a great fall in the mercury, the frost lays siege to the soil and effects a lodgment here and there, and extends its conquests gradually. At one place in the field you can easily run your staff through into the soft ground, when a few rods farther on it will be as hard as a rock. A little covering of dry grass or leaves is a great protection. The moist places hold out long, and the spring runs never freeze. You find the frost has gone several inches into the plowed ground, but on going to the woods, and poking away the leaves and débris under the hemlocks and cedars, you find there is no frost at all. The Earth freezes her ears and toes and naked places first, and her body last.

If heat were visible, or if we should represent it say by smoke, then the December landscape would present a curious spectacle. We should see the smoke lying low over the meadows, thickest in the hollows and moist places, and where the turf is oldest and densest. It would cling to the fences and ravines. Under every evergreen tree we should

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see the vapor rising and filling the branches, while the woods of pine and hemlock would be blue with it long after it had disappeared from the open country. It would rise from the tops of the trees, and be carried this way and that with the wind. The valleys of the great rivers, like the Hudson, would overflow with it. Large bodies of water become regular magazines in which heat is stored during the summer, and they give it out again during the fall and early winter. The early frosts keep well back from the Hudson, skulking behind the ridges, and hardly come over in sight at any point. But they grow bold as the season advances, till the river's fires, too, are put out and Winter covers it with his snows.

XI

One of the strong and original strokes of Nature was when she made the loon. It is always refreshing to contemplate a creature so positive and characteristic. He is the great diver and flyer under water. The loon is the *genius loci* of the wild northern lakes, as solitary as they are. Some birds represent the majesty of nature, like the eagles; others its ferocity; like the hawks; others its cunning, like the crow; others its sweetness and melody, like the song-birds. The loon represents its wildness and solitariness. It is cousin to the beaver. It has the feathers of a bird and the fur of an animal, and the heart of both. It is as quick and cunning

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as it is bold and resolute. It dives with such marvelous quickness that the shot of the gunner get there just in time "to cut across a circle of descending tail feathers and a couple of little jets of water flung upward by the web feet of the loon." When disabled so that it can neither dive nor fly, it is said to face its foe, look him in the face with its clear, piercing eye, and fight resolutely till death. The gunners say there is something in its wailing, piteous cry, when dying, almost human in its agony. The loon is, in the strictest sense, an aquatic fowl. It can barely walk upon the land, and one species at least cannot take flight from the shore. But in the water its feet are more than feet, and its wings more than wings. It plunges into this denser air and flies with incredible speed. Its head and beak form a sharp point to its tapering neck. Its wings are far in front and its legs equally far in the rear, and its course through the crystal depths is like the speed of an arrow. In the northern lakes it has been taken forty feet under water upon hooks baited for the great lake trout. I had never seen one till last fall, when one appeared on the river in front of my house. I knew instantly it was the loon. Who could not tell a loon a half mile or more away, though he had never seen one before? The river was like glass, and every movement of the bird as it sported about broke the surface into ripples, that revealed it far and wide. Presently a boat shot out

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from shore, and went ripping up the surface toward the loon. The creature at once seemed to divine the intentions of the boatman, and sidled off obliquely, keeping a sharp lookout as if to make sure it was pursued. A steamer came down and passed between them, and when the way was again clear, the loon was still swimming on the surface. Presently it disappeared under the water, and the boatman pulled sharp and hard. In a few moments the bird reappeared some rods farther on, as if to make an observation. Seeing it was being pursued, and no mistake, it dived quickly, and, when it came up again, had gone many times as far as the boat had in the same space of time. Then it dived again, and distanced its pursuer so easily that he gave over the chase and rested upon his oars. But the bird made a final plunge, and, when it emerged upon the surface again, it was over a mile away. Its course must have been, and doubtless was, an actual flight under water, and half as fast as the crow flies in the air.

The loon would have delighted the old poets. Its wild, demoniac laughter awakens the echoes on the solitary lakes, and its ferity and hardness are kindred to those robust spirits.

XII

One notable difference between man and the four-footed animals which has often occurred to me is

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in the eye, and the greater perfection, or rather supremacy, of the sense of sight in the human species. All the animals — the dog, the fox, the wolf, the deer, the cow, the horse — depend mainly upon the senses of hearing and smell. Almost their entire powers of discrimination are confined to these two senses. The dog picks his master out of the crowd by smell, and the cow her calf out of the herd. Sight is only partial recognition. The question can only be settled beyond all doubt by the aid of the nose. The fox, alert and cunning as he is, will pass within a few yards of the hunter and not know him from a stump. A squirrel will run across your lap, and a marmot between your feet, if you are motionless. When a herd of cattle see a strange object, they are not satisfied till each one has sniffed it; and the horse is cured of his fright at the robe, or the meal-bag, or other object, as soon as he can be induced to smell it. There is a great deal of speculation in the eye of an animal, but very little science. Then you cannot catch an animal's eye; he looks at you, but not *into* your eye. The dog directs his gaze toward your face, but, for aught you can tell, it centres upon your mouth or nose. The same with your horse or cow. Their eye is vague and indefinite.

Not so with the birds. The bird has the human eye in its clearness, its power, and its supremacy over the other senses. How acute their sense of smell may be is uncertain; their hearing is sharp

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enough, but their vision is the most remarkable. A crow or a hawk, or any of the larger birds, will not mistake you for a stump or a rock, stand you never so still amid the bushes. But they cannot separate you from your horse or team. A hawk reads a man on horseback as one animal, and reads it as a horse. None of the sharp-scented animals could be thus deceived.

The bird has man's brain also in its size. The brain of a song-bird is even much larger in proportion than that of the greatest human monarch, and its life is correspondingly intense and high-strung. But the bird's eye is superficial. It is on the outside of his head. It is round, that it may take in a full circle at a glance.

All the quadrupeds emphasize their direct forward gaze by a corresponding movement of the ears, as if to supplement and aid one sense with another. But man's eye seldom needs the confirmation of his ear, while it is so set, and his head so poised, that his look is forcible and pointed without being thus seconded.

XIII

I once saw a cow that had lost her cud. How forlorn and desolate and sick at heart that cow looked! No more rumination, no more of that second and finer mastication, no more of that sweet and juicy reverie under the spreading trees, or in

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the stall. Then the farmer took an elder and scraped the bark and put something with it, and made the cow a cud, and, after due waiting, the experiment took, a response came back, and the mysterious machinery was once more in motion, and the cow was herself again.

Have you, O poet, or essayist, or story-writer, never lost your cud, and wandered about days and weeks without being able to start a single thought or an image that tasted good, — your literary appetite dull or all gone, and the conviction daily growing that it was all over with you in that direction? A little elder-bark, something fresh and bitter from the woods, is about the best thing you can take.

XIV

Notwithstanding what I have elsewhere said about the desolation of snow, when one looks closely it is little more than a thin veil after all, and takes and repeats the form of whatever it covers. Every path through the fields is just as plain as before. On every hand the ground sends tokens, and the curves and slopes are not of the snow, but of the earth beneath. In like manner the rankest vegetation hides the ground less than we think. Looking across a wide valley in the month of July, I have noted that the fields, except the meadows, had a ruddy tinge, and that corn, which near at hand seemed to completely envelop the soil, at that dis-

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tance gave only a slight shade of green. The color of the ground everywhere predominated, and I doubt not that, if we could see the earth from a point sufficiently removed, as from the moon, its ruddy hue, like that of Mars, would alone be visible.

What is a man but a miniature earth, with many disguises in the way of manners, possessions, dissemblances? Yet through all — through all the work of his hands and all the thoughts of his mind — how surely the ground quality of him, the fundamental hue, whether it be this or that, makes itself felt and is alone important!

XV

Men follow their noses, it is said. I have wondered why the Greek did not follow his nose in architecture, — did not copy those arches that spring from it as from a pier, and support his brow, — but always and everywhere used the post and the lintel. There was something in that face that has never reappeared in the human countenance. I am thinking especially of that straight, strong profile. Is it really godlike, or is this impression the result of association? But any suggestion or reminiscence of it in the modern face at once gives one the idea of strength. It is a face strong in the loins, or it suggests a high, elastic instep. It is the face of order and proportion. Those arches are the symbols of law and self-control. The point of greatest

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interest is the union of the nose with the brow, — that strong, high embankment; it makes the bridge from the ideal to the real sure and easy. All the Greek's ideas passed readily into form. In the modern face the arches are more or less crushed, and the nose is severed from the brow, — hence the abstract and the analytic; hence the preponderance of the speculative intellect over creative power.

XVI

I have thought that the boy is the only true lover of Nature, and that we, who make such a dead set at studying and admiring her, come very wide of the mark. "The nonchalance of a boy who is sure of his dinner," says our Emerson, "is the healthy attitude of humanity." The boy is a part of Nature; he is as indifferent, as careless, as vagrant as she. He browses, he digs, he hunts, he climbs, he halloes, he feeds on roots and greens and mast. He uses things roughly and without sentiment. The coolness with which boys will drown dogs or cats, or hang them to trees, or murder young birds, or torture frogs or squirrels, is like Nature's own mercilessness.

Certain it is that we often get some of the best touches of nature from children. Childhood is a world by itself, and we listen to children when they frankly speak out of it with a strange interest. There is such a freedom from responsibility and

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from worldly wisdom, — it is heavenly wisdom. There is no sentiment in children, because there is no ruin; nothing has gone to decay about them yet, — not a leaf or a twig. Until he is well into his teens, and sometimes later, a boy is like a bean-pod before the fruit has developed, — indefinite, succulent, rich in possibilities which are only vaguely outlined. He is a pericarp merely. How rudimental are all his ideas! I knew a boy who began his school composition on swallows by saying there were two kinds of swallows, — chimney swallows and swallows.

Girls come to themselves sooner; are indeed, from the first, more definite and “translatable.”

XVII

Who will write the natural history of the boy? One of the first points to be taken account of is his clannishness. The boys of one neighborhood are always pitted against those of an adjoining neighborhood, or of one end of the town against those of the other end. A bridge, a river, a railroad track, are always boundaries of hostile or semi-hostile tribes. The boys that go up the road from the country school hoot derisively at those that go down the road, and not infrequently add the insult of stones; and the down-roaders return the hooting and the missiles with interest.

Often there is open war, and the boys meet and

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have regular battles. A few years since, the boys of two rival towns on opposite sides of the Ohio River became so belligerent that the authorities had to interfere. Whenever an Ohio boy was caught on the West Virginia side of the river, he was unmercifully beaten; and when a West Virginia boy was discovered on the Ohio side, he was pounced upon in the same manner. One day a vast number of boys, about one hundred and fifty on a side, met by appointment upon the ice and engaged in a pitched battle. Every conceivable missile was used, including pistols. The battle, says the local paper, raged with fury for about two hours. One boy received a wound behind the ear, from the effects of which he died the next morning. More recently the boys of a large manufacturing town of New Jersey were divided into two hostile clans that came into frequent collision. One Saturday both sides mustered their forces, and a regular fight ensued, one boy here also losing his life from the encounter.

Every village and settlement is at times the scene of these youthful collisions. When a new boy appears in the village, or at the country school, how the other boys crowd around him and take his measure, or pick at him and insult him to try his mettle!

I knew a boy, twelve or thirteen years old, who was sent to help a drover with some cattle as far as a certain village ten miles from his home. After the place was reached, and while the boy was eating

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his cracker and candies, he strolled about the village, and fell in with some other boys playing upon a bridge. In a short time a large number of children of all sizes had collected upon the bridge. The new-comer was presently challenged by the boys of his own age to jump with them. This he readily did, and cleared their farthest mark. Then he gave them a sample of his stone-throwing, and at this pastime he also far surpassed his competitors. Before long, the feeling of the crowd began to set against him, showing itself first in the smaller fry, who began half playfully to throw pebbles and lumps of dry earth at him. Then they would run up slyly and strike him with sticks. Presently the large ones began to tease him in like manner, till the contagion of hostility spread, and the whole pack was arrayed against the strange boy. He kept them at bay for a few moments with his stick, till, the feeling mounting higher and higher, he broke through their ranks, and fled precipitately toward home, with the throng of little and big at his heels. Gradually the girls and smaller boys dropped behind, till at the end of the first fifty rods only two boys of about his own size, with wrath and determination in their faces, kept up the pursuit. But to these he added the final insult of beating them at running also, and reached, much blown, a point beyond which they refused to follow.

The world the boy lives in is separate and dis-

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inct from the world the man lives in. It is a world inhabited only by boys. No events are important or of any moment save those affecting boys. How they ignore the presence of their elders on the street, shouting out their invitations, their appointments, their pass-words from our midst, as from the veriest solitude! They have peculiar calls, whistles, signals, by which they communicate with each other at long distances, like birds or wild creatures. And there is as genuine a wildness about these notes and calls as about those of a fox or a coon.

The boy is a savage, a barbarian, in his taste, — devouring roots, leaves, bark, unripe fruit ; and in the kind of music or discord he delights in, — of harmony he has no perception. He has his fashions that spread from city to city. In one of our large cities the rage at one time was an old tin can with a string attached, out of which they tortured the most savage and ear-splitting discords. The police were obliged to interfere and suppress the nuisance. On another occasion, at Christmas, they all came forth with tin horns, and nearly drove the town distracted with the hideous uproar.

Another savage trait of the boy is his untruthfulness. Corner him, and the chances are ten to one he will lie his way out. Conscience is a plant of slow growth in the boy. If caught in one lie, he invents another. I know a boy who was in the habit of eating apples in school. His teacher finally

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caught him in the act, and, without removing his eye from him, called him to the middle of the floor.

"I saw you this time," said the teacher.

"Saw me what?" said the boy innocently.

"Bite that apple," replied the teacher.

"No, sir," said the rascal.

"Open your mouth;" and from its depths the teacher, with his thumb and finger, took out the piece of apple.

"Did n't know it was there," said the boy, unabashed.

Nearly all the moral sentiment and graces are late in maturing in the boy. He has no proper self-respect till past his majority. Of course there are exceptions, but they are mostly windfalls. The good boys die young. We lament the wickedness and thoughtlessness of the young vagabonds at the same time that we know it is mainly the acidity and bitterness of the unripe fruit that we are lamenting.

III

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PEOPLE who have not made friends with the birds do not know how much they miss. Especially to one living in the country, of strong local attachments and an observing turn of mind, does an acquaintance with the birds form a close and invaluable tie. The only time I saw Thomas Carlyle, I remember his relating, apropos of this subject, that in his earlier days he was sent on a journey to a distant town on some business that gave him much bother and vexation, and that on his way back home, forlorn and dejected, he suddenly heard the larks singing all about him, — soaring and singing, just as they did about his father's fields, and it comforted him and cheered him up amazingly.

Most lovers of the birds can doubtless recall similar experiences from their own lives. Nothing wounts me to a new place more than the birds. I go, for instance, to take up my abode in the country, — to plant myself upon unfamiliar ground. I know nobody, and nobody knows me. The roads, the fields, the hills, the streams, the woods, are all strange. I look wistfully upon them, but they know me not.

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They give back nothing to my yearning gaze. But there, on every hand, are the long-familiar birds, — the same ones I left behind me, the same ones I knew in my youth, — robins, sparrows, swallows, bobolinks, crows, hawks, high-holes, meadowlarks, all there before me, and ready to renew and perpetuate the old associations. Before my house is begun, theirs is completed; before I have taken root at all, they are thoroughly established. I do not yet know what kind of apples my apple-trees bear, but there, in the cavity of a decayed limb, the bluebirds are building a nest, and yonder, on that branch, the social sparrow is busy with hairs and straws. The robins have tasted the quality of my cherries, and the cedar-birds have known every red cedar on the place these many years. While my house is yet surrounded by its scaffoldings, the phœbe-bird has built her exquisite mossy nest on a projecting stone beneath the eaves, a robin has filled a niche in the wall with mud and dry grass, the chimney swallows are going out and in the chimney, and a pair of house wrens are at home in a snug cavity over the door, and, during an April snow-storm, a number of hermit thrushes have taken shelter in my unfinished chambers. Indeed, I am in the midst of friends before I fairly know it. The place is not so new as I had thought. It is already old; the birds have supplied the memories of many decades of years.

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There is something almost pathetic in the fact that the birds remain forever the same. You grow old, your friends die or move to distant lands, events sweep on, and all things are changed. Yet there in your garden or orchard are the birds of your boyhood, the same notes, the same calls, and, to all intents and purposes, the identical birds endowed with perennial youth. The swallows, that built so far out of your reach beneath the eaves of your father's barn, the same ones now squeak and chatter beneath the eaves of your barn. The warblers and shy wood-birds you pursued with such glee ever so many summers ago, and whose names you taught to some beloved youth who now, perchance, sleeps amid his native hills, no marks of time or change cling to them; and when you walk out to the strange woods, there they are, mocking you with their ever-renewed and joyous youth. The call of the high-holes, the whistle of the quail, the strong piercing note of the meadowlark, the drumming of the grouse, — how these sounds ignore the years, and strike on the ear with the melody of that spring-time when the world was young, and life was a holiday and romance!

During any unusual tension of the feelings or emotions, how the note or song of a single bird will sink into the memory, and become inseparably associated with your grief or joy! Shall I ever again be able to hear the song of the oriole without being

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pierced through and through? Can it ever be other than a dirge for the dead to me? Day after day, and week after week, this bird whistled and warbled in a mulberry by the door, while sorrow, like a pall, darkened my day. So loud and persistent was the singer that his note teased and worried my excited ear.

“Hearken to yon pine warbler,
Singing aloft in the tree!
Hearest thou, O traveler!
What he singeth to me?

“Not unless God made sharp thine ear
With sorrow such as mine,
Out of that delicate lay couldst thou
Its heavy tale divine.”

It is the opinion of some naturalists that birds never die what is called a natural death, but come to their end by some murderous or accidental means; yet I have found sparrows and vireos in the fields and woods dead or dying, that bore no marks of violence; and I remember that once in my childhood a redbird fell down in the yard exhausted, and was brought in by the girl; its bright scarlet image is indelibly stamped upon my recollection. It is not known that birds have any distempers like the domestic fowls, but I saw a social sparrow one day quite disabled by some curious malady that suggested a disease that sometimes attacks poultry;

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one eye was nearly put out by a scrofulous-looking sore, and on the last joint of one wing there was a large tumorous or fungous growth that crippled the bird completely. On another occasion I picked up one that appeared well, but could not keep its centre of gravity when in flight, and so fell to the ground.

One reason why dead birds and animals are so rarely found is, that on the approach of death their instinct prompts them to creep away in some hole or under some cover, where they will be least liable to fall a prey to their natural enemies. It is doubtful if any of the game-birds, like the pigeon and grouse, ever die of old age, or the semi-game-birds, like the bobolink, or the "century living" crow; but in what other form can death overtake the hummingbird, or even the swift and the barn swallow? Such are true birds of the air; they may be occasionally lost at sea during their migrations, but, so far as I know, they are not preyed upon by any other species.

The valley of the Hudson, I find, forms a great natural highway for the birds, as do doubtless the Connecticut, the Susquehanna, the Delaware, and all other large water-courses running north and south. The birds love an easy way, and in the valleys of the rivers they find a road already graded for them; and they abound more in such places throughout the season than they do farther inland.

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The swarms of robins that come to us in early spring are a delight to behold. In one of his poems Emerson speaks of

“April’s bird,
Blue-coated, flying before from tree to tree;”

but April’s bird with me is the robin, brisk, vociferous, musical, dotting every field, and larking it in every grove; he is as easily atop at this season as the bobolink is a month or two later. The tints of April are ruddy and brown, — the new furrow and the leafless trees, — and these are the tints of its dominant bird.

From my dining-room window I look, or did look, out upon a long stretch of smooth meadow, and as pretty a spring sight as I ever wish to behold was this field, sprinkled all over with robins, their red breasts turned toward the morning sun, or their pert forms sharply outlined against lingering patches of snow. Every morning for weeks I had those robins for breakfast; but what *they* had I never could find out.

After the leaves are out, and gayer colors come into fashion, the robin takes a back seat. He goes to housekeeping in the old apple-tree, or, what he likes better, the cherry-tree. A pair reared their domestic altar (of mud and dry grass) in one of the latter trees, where I saw much of them. The cock took it upon himself to keep the tree free of all other

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robins during cherry time, and its branches were the scene of some lively tussles every hour in the day. The innocent visitor would scarcely alight before the jealous cock was upon him; but while he was thrusting the intruder out at one side, a second would be coming in on the other. He managed, however, to protect his cherries very well, but had so little time to eat the fruit himself that we got fully our share.

I have frequently seen the robin courting, and have always been astonished and amused at the utter coldness and indifference of the female. The females of every species of bird, however, I believe, have this in common, — they are absolutely free from coquetry, or any airs and wiles whatever. In most cases, Nature has given the song and the plumage to the other sex, and all the embellishing and acting is done by the male bird.

I am always at home when I see the passenger pigeon. Few spectacles please me more than to see clouds of these birds sweeping across the sky, and few sounds are more agreeable to my ear than their lively piping and calling in the spring woods. They come in such multitudes, they people the whole air; they cover townships, and make the solitary places gay as with a festival. The naked woods are suddenly blue as with fluttering ribbons and scarfs, and vocal as with the voices of children. Their arrival is always unexpected. We know April will

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bring the robins and May the bobolinks, but we do not know that either they or any other month will bring the passenger pigeon. Sometimes years elapse and scarcely a flock is seen. Then, of a sudden, some March or April they come pouring over the horizon from the south or southwest, and for a few days the land is alive with them.

The whole race seems to be collected in a few vast swarms or assemblages. Indeed, I have sometimes thought there was only one such in the United States, and that it moved in squads, and regiments, and brigades, and divisions, like a giant army. The scouting and foraging squads are not unusual, and every few years we see larger bodies of them, but rarely indeed do we witness the spectacle of the whole vast tribe in motion. Sometimes we hear of them in Virginia, or Kentucky and Tennessee; then in Ohio or Pennsylvania; then in New York; then in Canada or Michigan or Missouri. They are followed from point to point, and from State to State, by human sharks, who catch and shoot them for market.

A year ago last April, the pigeons flew for two or three days up and down the Hudson. In long bowing lines, or else in dense masses, they moved across the sky. It was not the whole army, but I should think at least one corps of it; I had not seen such a flight of pigeons since my boyhood. I went up to the top of the house, the better to behold the winged

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procession. The day seemed memorable and poetic in which such sights occurred.¹

While I was looking at the pigeons, a flock of wild geese went by, harrowing the sky northward. The geese strike a deeper chord than the pigeons. Level and straight they go as fate to its mark. I cannot tell what emotions these migrating birds awaken in me, — the geese especially. One seldom sees more than a flock or two in a season, and what a spring token it is! The great bodies are in motion. It is like the passage of a victorious army. No longer inch by inch does spring come, but these geese advance the standard across zones at one pull. How my desire goes with them; how something in me, wild and migratory, plumes itself and follows fast!

“Steering north, with raucous cry,
Through tracts and provinces of sky,
Every night alighting down
In new landscapes of romance,
Where darkling feed the clamorous clans
By lonely lakes to men unknown.”

Dwelling upon these sights, I am reminded that the seeing of spring come, not only upon the great wings of the geese and the lesser wings of the

¹ This proved to be the last flight of the pigeons in the valley of the Hudson. The whole tribe has now (1895) been nearly exterminated by pot-hunters. The few that still remain appear to be scattered through the Northern States in small, loose flocks.

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pigeons and birds, but in the many more subtle and indirect signs and mediums, is also a part of the compensation of living in the country. I enjoy not less what may be called the negative side of spring, — those dark, dank, dissolving days, yellow sposh and mud and water everywhere, — yet who can stay long indoors? The humidity is soft and satisfying to the smell, and to the face and hands, and, for the first time for months, there is the fresh odor of the earth. The air is full of the notes and calls of the first birds. The domestic fowls refuse their accustomed food and wander far from the barn. Is it something winter has left, or spring has dropped, that they pick up? And what is it that holds me so long standing in the yard or in the fields? Something besides the ice and snow melts and runs away with the spring floods.

The little sparrows and purple finches are so punctual in announcing spring, that some seasons one wonders how they know without looking in the almanac, for surely there are no signs of spring out of doors. Yet they will strike up as cheerily amid the driving snow as if they had just been told that to-morrow is the first day of March. About the same time I notice the potatoes in the cellar show signs of sprouting. They, too, find out so quickly when spring is near. Spring comes by two routes, — in the air and underground, and often gets here by the latter course first. She undermines Winter

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when outwardly his front is nearly as bold as ever. I have known the trees to bud long before, by outward appearances, one would expect them to. The frost was gone from the ground before the snow was gone from the surface.

But Winter hath his birds also; some of them such tiny bodies that one wonders how they withstand the giant cold, — but they do. Birds live on highly concentrated food, — the fine seeds of weeds and grasses, and the eggs and larvæ of insects. Such food must be very stimulating and heating. A gizzard full of ants, for instance, what spiced and seasoned extract is equal to that? Think what virtue there must be in an ounce of gnats or mosquitoes, or in the fine mysterious food the chickadee and the brown creeper gather in the winter woods! It is doubtful if these birds ever freeze when fuel enough can be had to keep their little furnaces going. And, as they get their food entirely from the limbs and trunks of trees, like the woodpeckers, their supply is seldom interfered with by the snow. The worst annoyance must be the enameling of ice our winter woods sometimes get.

Indeed, the food question seems to be the only serious one with the birds. Give them plenty to eat, and no doubt the majority of them would face our winters. I believe all the woodpeckers are winter birds, except the high-hole or yellow-hammer, and he obtains the greater part of his subsistence

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from the ground, and is not a *woodpecker* at all in his habits of feeding. Were it not that it has recourse to budding, the ruffed grouse would be obliged to migrate. The quail — a bird, no doubt, equally hardy, but whose food is at the mercy of the snow — is frequently cut off by our severe winters when it ventures to brave them, which is not often. Where plenty of the berries of the red cedar can be had, the cedar-bird will pass the winter in New York. The old ornithologists say the bluebird migrates to Bermuda; but in the winter of 1874-75, severe as it was, a pair of them wintered with me eighty miles north of New York city. They seem to have been decided in their choice by the attractions of my rustic porch and the fruit of a sugar-berry tree (*celtis* — a kind of tree-lotus) that stood in front of it. They lodged in the porch and took their meals in the tree. Indeed, they became regular lotus-eaters. Punctually at dusk they were in their places on a large laurel root in the top of the porch, whence, however, they were frequently routed by an indignant broom that was jealous of the neatness of the porch floor. But the pair would not take any hints of this kind, and did not give up their quarters in the porch or their lotus berries till spring.

Many times during the winter the sugar-berry tree was visited by a flock of cedar-birds that also wintered in the vicinity. At such times it was amusing to witness the pretty wrath of the bluebirds,

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scolding and threatening the intruders, and begrudging them every berry they ate. The bluebird cannot utter a harsh or unpleasing note. Indeed, he seems to have but one language, one speech, for both love and war, and the expression of his indignation is nearly as musical as his song. The male frequently made hostile demonstrations toward the cedar-birds, but did not openly attack them, and, with his mate, appeared to experience great relief when the poachers had gone.

I had other company in my solitude also, among the rest a distinguished arrival from the far north, the pine grosbeak, a bird rarely seen in these parts, except now and then a single specimen. But in the winter of 1875, heralding the extreme cold weather, and no doubt in consequence of it, there was a large incursion of them into this State and New England. They attracted the notice of the country people everywhere. I first saw them early in December about the head of the Delaware. I was walking along a cleared ridge with my gun, just at sundown, when I beheld two strange birds sitting in a small maple. On bringing one of them down, I found it was a bird I had never before seen; in color and shape like the purple finch, but quite as large again in size. From its heavy beak, I at once recognized it as belonging to the family of grosbeaks. A few days later I saw large numbers of them in the woods, on the ground, and in the trees.

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And still later, and on till February, they were very numerous on the Hudson, coming all about my house, — more familiar even than the little snow-bird, hopping beneath the windows, and looking up at me apparently with as much curiosity as I looked down upon them. They fed on the buds of the sugar maples and upon frozen apples in the orchard. They were mostly young birds and females, colored very much like the common sparrow, with now and then visible the dull carmine-colored head and neck of an old male.

Other northern visitors that tarried with me the same winter were the tree or Canada sparrow and the redpoll, the former a bird larger than the social sparrow or hair-bird, but otherwise much resembling it, and distinguishable by a dark spot in the middle of its breast; the latter a bird the size and shape of the common goldfinch, with the same manner of flight and nearly the same note or cry, but darker than the winter plumage of the goldfinch, and with a red crown and a tinge of red on the breast. Little bands of these two species lurked about the barnyard all winter, picking up the hayseed, the sparrow sometimes venturing in on the haymow when the supply outside was short. I felt grateful to them for their company. They gave a sort of ornithological air to every errand I had to the barn.

Though a number of birds face our winters, and

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by various shifts worry through till spring, some of them permanent residents, and some of them visitors from the far north, yet there is but one genuine snow bird, nursling of the snow, and that is the snow bunting, a bird that seems proper to this season, heralding the coming storm, sweeping by on bold and rapid wing, and calling and chirping as cheerily as the songsters of May. In its plumage it reflects the winter landscape, — an expanse of white surmounted or streaked with gray and brown; a field of snow with a line of woods or a tinge of stubble. It fits into the scene, and does not appear to lead a beggarly and disconsolate life, like most of our winter residents. During the ice-harvesting on the river, I see them flitting about among the gangs of men, or floating on the cakes of ice, picking and scratching amid the droppings of the horses. They love the stack and hay-barn in the distant field, where the farmer fodders his cattle upon the snow, and every red-root, ragweed, or pigweed left standing in the fall adds to their winter stores.

Though this bird, and one or two others, like the chickadee and nuthatch, are more or less complacent and cheerful during the winter, yet no bird can look our winters in the face and sing, as do so many of the English birds. Several species in Great Britain, their biographers tell us, sing the winter through, except during the severest frosts; but with us, as far south as Virginia, and, for aught I know,

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much farther, the birds are tuneless at this season. The owls, even, do not hoot, nor the hawks scream.

Among the birds that tarry briefly with us in the spring on their way to Canada and beyond, there is none I behold with so much pleasure as the white-crowned sparrow. I have an eye out for him all through April and the first week in May. He is the rarest and most beautiful of the sparrow kind. He is crowned, as some hero or victor in the games. He is usually in company with his congener, the white-throated sparrow, but seldom more than in the proportion of one to twenty of the latter. Contrasted with this bird, he looks like its more fortunate brother, upon whom some special distinction has been conferred, and who is, from the egg, of finer make and quality. His sparrow color of ashen gray and brown is very clear and bright, and his form graceful. His whole expression, however, culminates in a singular manner in his crown. The various tints of the bird are brought to a focus here and intensified, the lighter ones becoming white, and the deeper ones nearly black. There is the suggestion of a crest, also, from a habit the bird has of slightly elevating this part of its plumage, as if to make more conspicuous its pretty markings. They are great scratchers, and will often remain several minutes scratching in one place, like a hen. Yet, unlike the hen and like all hoppers, they scratch

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with both feet at once, which is by no means the best way to scratch.

The white-throats often sing during their sojourning both in fall and spring; but only on one occasion have I ever heard any part of the song of the white-crowned, and that proceeded from what I took to be a young male, one October morning, just as the sun was rising. It was pitched very low, like a half-forgotten air, but it was very sweet. It was the song of the vesper sparrow and the white-throat in one. In his breeding haunts he must be a superior songster, but he is very chary of his music while on his travels.

The sparrows are all meek and lowly birds. They are of the grass, the fences, the low bushes, the weedy wayside places. Nature has denied them all brilliant tints, but she has given them sweet and musical voices. Theirs are the quaint and simple lullaby songs of childhood. The white-throat has a timid, tremulous strain, that issues from the low bushes or from behind the fence, where its cradle is hid. The song sparrow modulates its simple ditty as softly as the lining of its own nest. The vesper sparrow has only peace and gentleness in its strain.

What pretty nests, too, the sparrows build! Can anything be more exquisite than a sparrow's nest under a grassy or mossy bank? What care the bird has taken not to disturb one straw or spear of grass, or thread of moss! You cannot approach it and

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put your hand into it without violating the place more or less, and yet the little architect has wrought day after day and left no marks. There has been an excavation, and yet no grain of earth appears to have been moved. If the nest had slowly and silently grown like the grass and the moss, it could not have been more nicely adjusted to its place and surroundings. There is absolutely nothing to tell the eye it is there. Generally a few spears of dry grass fall down from the turf above and form a slight screen before it. How commonly and coarsely it begins, blending with the débris that lies about, and how it refines and comes into form as it approaches the centre, which is modeled so perfectly and lined so softly! Then, when the full complement of eggs is laid, and incubation has fairly begun, what a sweet, pleasing little mystery the silent old bank holds!

The song sparrow, whose nest I have been describing, displays a more marked individuality in its song than any bird with which I am acquainted. Birds of the same species generally all sing alike, but I have observed numerous song sparrows with songs peculiarly their own. Last season, the whole summer through, one sang about my grounds like this: *swee-e-t, swee-e-t, swee-e-t, bitter*. Day after day, from May to September, I heard this strain, which I thought a simple but very profound summing-up of life, and wondered how the little bird

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had learned it so quickly. The present season, I heard another with a song equally original, but not so easily worded. Among a large troop of them in April, my attention was attracted to one that was a master songster, — some Shelley or Tennyson among his kind. The strain was remarkably prolonged, intricate, and animated, and far surpassed anything I ever before heard from that source.

But the most noticeable instance of departure from the standard song of a species I ever knew of was in the case of a wood thrush. The bird sang, as did the sparrow, the whole season through, at the foot of my lot near the river. The song began correctly and ended correctly; but interjected into it about midway was a loud, piercing, artificial note, at utter variance with the rest of the strain. When my ear first caught this singular note, I started out, not a little puzzled, to make, as I supposed, a new acquaintance, but had not gone far when I discovered whence it proceeded. Brass amid gold, or pebbles amid pearls, are not more out of place than was this discordant scream or cry in the melodious strain of the wood thrush. It pained and startled the ear. It seemed as if the instrument of the bird was not under control, or else that one note was sadly out of tune, and, when its turn came, instead of giving forth one of those sounds that are indeed like pearls, it shocked the ear with a piercing discord. Yet the singer appeared entirely

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unconscious of the defect ; or had he grown used to it, or had his friends persuaded him that it was a variation to be coveted ? Sometimes, after the brood had hatched and the bird's pride was at its full, he would make a little triumphal tour of the locality, coming from under the hill quite up to the house, and flaunting his cracked instrument in the face of whoever would listen. He did not return again the next season ; or, if he did, the malformation of his song was gone.

I have noticed that the bobolink does not sing the same in different localities. In New Jersey it has one song ; on the Hudson, a slight variation of the same ; and on the high grass-lands of the interior of the State, quite a different strain, — clearer, more distinctly articulated, and running off with more sparkle and litingness. It reminds one of the clearer mountain air and the translucent spring-water of those localities. I never could make out what the bobolink says in New Jersey, but in certain districts in this State his enunciation is quite distinct. Sometimes he begins with the word *gegue*, *gegue*. Then again, more fully, *be true to me, Clarsy, be true to me, Clarsy, Clarsy*, thence full tilt into his inimitable song, interspersed in which the words *kick your slipper, kick your slipper, and temperance, temperance* (the last with a peculiar nasal resonance), are plainly heard. At its best, it is a remarkable performance, a unique perform-

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ance, as it contains not the slightest hint or suggestion, either in tone or manner or effect, of any other bird-song to be heard. The bobolink has no mate or parallel in any part of the world. He stands alone. There is no closely allied species. He is not a lark, nor a finch, nor a warbler, nor a thrush, nor a starling (though classed with the starlings by late naturalists). He is an exception to many well-known rules. He is the only ground-bird known to me of marked and conspicuous plumage. He is the only black and white field-bird we have east of the Mississippi, and, what is still more odd, he is black beneath and white above, — the reverse of the fact in all other cases. Preëminently a bird of the meadow during the breeding season, and associated with clover and daisies and buttercups as no other bird is, he yet has the look of an interloper or a newcomer, and not of one to the manner born.

The bobolink has an unusually full throat, which may help account for his great power of song. No bird has yet been found that could imitate him, or even repeat or suggest a single note, as if his song were the product of a new set of organs. There is a vibration about it, and a rapid running over the keys, that is the despair of other songsters. It is said that the mockingbird is dumb in the presence of the bobolink. My neighbor has an English skylark that was hatched and reared in captivity. The bird is a most persistent and vociferous songster,

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and fully as successful a mimic as the mockingbird. It pours out a strain that is a regular mosaic of nearly all the bird-notes to be heard, its own proper lark song forming a kind of bordering for the whole. The notes of the phœbe-bird, the purple finch, the swallow, the yellowbird, the kingbird, the robin, and others, are rendered with perfect distinctness and accuracy, but not a word of the bobolink's, though the lark must have heard its song every day for four successive summers. It was the one conspicuous note in the fields around that the lark made no attempt to plagiarize. He could not steal the bobolink's thunder.

The lark is a more marvelous songster than the bobolink only on account of his soaring flight and the sustained copiousness of his song. His note is rasping and harsh, in point of melody, when compared with the bobolink's. When caged and near at hand, the lark's song is positively disagreeable, it is so loud and full of sharp, aspirated sounds. But high in air above the broad downs, poured out without interruption for many minutes together, it is very agreeable.

The bird among us that is usually called a lark, namely, the meadowlark, but which our later classifiers say is no lark at all, has nearly the same quality of voice as the English skylark, — loud, piercing, z-z-ing; and during the mating season it frequently indulges while on the wing in a brief

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song that is quite lark-like. It is also a bird of the stubble, and one of the last to retreat on the approach of winter.

The habits of many of our birds are slowly undergoing a change. Their migrations are less marked. With the settlement and cultivation of the country, the means of subsistence of nearly every species are vastly increased. Insects are more numerous, and seeds of weeds and grasses more abundant. They become more and more domestic, like the English birds. The swallows have nearly all left their original abodes — hollow trees, and cliffs, and rocks — for human habitations and their environments. Where did the barn swallow nest before the country was settled? The chimney swallow nested in hollow trees, and, perhaps, occasionally resorts thither yet. But the chimney, notwithstanding the smoke, seems to suit his taste best. In the spring, before they have paired, I think these swallows sometimes pass the night in the woods, but not if an old, disused chimney is handy.

One evening in early May, my attention was arrested by a band of them containing several hundreds, perhaps a thousand, circling about near a large, tall, disused chimney in a secluded place in the country. They were very lively, and chipping, and diving in a most extraordinary manner. They formed a broad continuous circle many rods in diameter. Gradually the circle contracted and

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neared the chimney. Presently some of the birds as they came round began to dive toward it, and the chippering was more animated than ever. Then a few ventured in; in a moment more, the air at the mouth of the chimney was black with the stream of descending swallows. When the passage began to get crowded, the circle lifted and the rest of the birds continued their flight, giving those inside time to dispose of themselves. Then the influx began again, and was kept up till the crowd became too great, when it cleared as before. Thus by installments, or in layers, the swallows were packed into the chimney until the last one was stowed away. Passing by the place a few days afterward, I saw a board reaching from the roof of the building to the top of the chimney, and imagined some curious person or some predaceous boy had been up to take a peep inside, and see how so many swallows could dispose of themselves in such a space. It would have been an interesting spectacle to see them emerge from the chimney in the morning.

IV

APRIL

IF we represent the winter of our northern climate by a rugged snow-clad mountain, and summer by a broad fertile plain, then the intermediate belt, the hilly and breezy uplands, will stand for spring, with March reaching well up into the region of the snows, and April lapping well down upon the green-
ing fields and unloosened currents, not beyond the limits of winter's sallying storms, but well within the vernal zone, — within the reach of the warm breath and subtle, quickening influences of the plain below. At its best, April is the tenderest of tender salads made crisp by ice or snow water. Its type is the first spear of grass. The senses — sight, hearing, smell — are as hungry for its delicate and almost spiritual tokens as the cattle are for the first bite of its fields. How it touches one and makes him both glad and sad! The voices of the arriving birds, the migrating fowls, the clouds of pigeons sweeping across the sky or filling the woods, the elfin horn of the first honey-bee venturing abroad in the middle of the day, the clear piping of the little frogs in the marshes at sundown, the camp-

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fire in the sugar-bush, the smoke seen afar rising over the trees, the tinge of green that comes so suddenly on the sunny knolls and slopes, the full translucent streams, the waxing and warming sun, — how these things and others like them are noted by the eager eye and ear! April is my natal month, and I am born again into new delight and new surprises at each return of it. Its name has an indescribable charm to me. Its two syllables are like the calls of the first birds, — like that of the phœbe-bird, or of the meadowlark. Its very snows are fertilizing, and are called the poor man's manure.

Then its odors! I am thrilled by its fresh and indescribable odors, — the perfume of the bursting sod, of the quickened roots and rootlets, of the mould under the leaves, of the fresh furrows. No other month has odors like it. 'The west wind the other day came fraught with a perfume that was to the sense of smell what a wild and delicate strain of music is to the ear. It was almost transcendental. I walked across the hill with my nose in the air taking it in. It lasted for two days. I imagined it came from the willows of a distant swamp, whose catkins were affording the bees their first pollen: or did it come from much farther, — from beyond the horizon, the accumulated breath of innumerable farms and budding forests? The main characteristic of these April odors is their uncloying freshness. They are not sweet, they are oftener bitter, they

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are penetrating and lyrical. I know well the odors of May and June, of the world of meadows and orchards bursting into bloom, but they are not so ineffable and immaterial and so stimulating to the sense as the incense of April.

The season of which I speak does not correspond with the April of the almanac in all sections of our vast geography. It answers to March in Virginia and Maryland, while in parts of New York and New England it laps well over into May. It begins when the partridge drums, when the hyla pipes, when the shad start up the rivers, when the grass greens in the spring runs, and it ends when the leaves are unfolding and the last snowflake dissolves in midair. It may be the first of May before the first swallow appears, before the whip-poor-will is heard, before the wood thrush sings; but it is April as long as there is snow upon the mountains, no matter what the almanac may say. Our April is, in fact, a kind of Alpine summer, full of such contrasts and touches of wild, delicate beauty as no other season affords. The deluded citizen fancies there is nothing enjoyable in the country till June, and so misses the freshest, tenderest part. It is as if one should miss strawberries and begin his fruit-eating with melons and peaches. These last are good, — supremely so, they are melting and luscious, — but nothing so thrills and penetrates the taste, and wakes up and teases the papillæ of the tongue, as the uncloying

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strawberry. What midsummer sweetness half so distracting as its brisk sub-acid flavor, and what splendor of full-leaved June can stir the blood like the best of leafless April?

One characteristic April feature, and one that delights me very much, is the perfect emerald of the spring runs while the fields are yet brown and sere, — strips and patches of the most vivid velvet green on the slopes and in the valleys. How the eye grazes there, and is filled and refreshed! I had forgotten what a marked feature this was until I recently rode in an open wagon for three days through a mountainous, pastoral country, remarkable for its fine springs. Those delicious green patches are yet in my eye. The fountains flowed with May. Where no springs occurred, there were hints and suggestions of springs about the fields and by the roadside in the freshened grass, — sometimes overflowing a space in the form of an actual fountain. The water did not quite get to the surface in such places, but sent its influence.

The fields of wheat and rye, too, how they stand out of the April landscape, — great green squares on a field of brown or gray!

Among April sounds there is none more welcome or suggestive to me than the voice of the little frogs piping in the marshes. No bird-note can surpass it as a spring token; and as it is not mentioned, to my knowledge, by the poets and writers of other lands,

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I am ready to believe it is characteristic of our season alone. You may be sure April has really come when this little amphibian creeps out of the mud and inflates its throat. We talk of the bird inflating its throat, but you should see this tiny minstrel inflate *its* throat, which becomes like a large bubble, and suggests a drummer-boy with his drum slung very high. In this drum, or by the aid of it, the sound is produced. Generally the note is very feeble at first, as if the frost was not yet all out of the creature's throat, and only one voice will be heard, some prophet bolder than all the rest, or upon whom the quickening ray of spring has first fallen. And it often happens that he is stoned for his pains by the yet unpacified element, and is compelled literally to "shut up" beneath a fall of snow or a heavy frost. Soon, however, he lifts up his voice again with more confidence, and is joined by others and still others, till in due time, say toward the last of the month, there is a shrill musical uproar, as the sun is setting, in every marsh and bog in the land. It is a plaintive sound, and I have heard people from the city speak of it as lonesome and depressing, but to the lover of the country it is a pure spring melody. The little piper will sometimes climb a bulrush, to which he clings like a sailor to a mast, and send forth his shrill call. There is a Southern species, heard when you have reached the Potomac, whose note is far more harsh and crack-

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ling. To stand on the verge of a swamp vocal with these, pains and stuns the ear. The call of the Northern species is far more tender and musical.¹

Then is there anything like a perfect April morning? One hardly knows what the sentiment of it is, but it is something very delicious. It is youth and hope. It is a new earth and a new sky. How the air transmits sounds, and what an awakening, prophetic character all sounds have! The distant barking of a dog, or the lowing of a cow, or the crowing of a cock, seems from out the heart of Nature, and to be a call to come forth. The great sun appears to have been reburnished, and there is something in his first glance above the eastern hills, and the way his eye-beams dart right and left and smite the rugged mountains into gold, that quickens the pulse and inspires the heart.

Across the fields in the early morning I hear some of the rare April birds, — the chewink and the brown thrasher. The robin, the bluebird, the song sparrow, the phoebe-bird, come in March; but these two ground-birds are seldom heard till toward the last of April. The ground-birds are all tree-singers or air-singers; they must have an elevated stage to speak from. Our long-tailed thrush, or thrasher, like its congeners the catbird and the mocking-bird, delights in a high branch of some solitary tree,

¹ The Southern species is called the green hyla. I have since heard them in my neighborhood on the Hudson.

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whence it will pour out its rich and intricate warble for an hour together. This bird is the great American chipper. There is no other bird that I know of that can chip with such emphasis and military decision as this yellow-eyed songster. It is like the click of a giant gunlock. Why is the thrasher so stealthy? It always seems to be going about on tip-toe. I never knew it to steal anything, and yet it skulks and hides like a fugitive from justice. One never sees it flying aloft in the air and traversing the world openly, like most birds, but it darts along fences and through bushes as if pursued by a guilty conscience. Only when the musical fit is upon it does it come up into full view, and invite the world to hear and behold.

The chewink is a shy bird also, but not stealthy. It is very inquisitive, and sets up a great scratching among the leaves, apparently to attract your attention. The male is perhaps the most conspicuously marked of all the ground-birds except the bobolink, being black above, bay on the sides, and white beneath. The bay is in compliment to the leaves he is forever scratching among, — they have rustled against his breast and sides so long that these parts have taken their color; but whence come the white and the black? The bird seems to be aware that his color betrays him, for there are few birds in the woods so careful about keeping themselves screened from view. When in song, its favorite perch is the

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top of some high bush near to cover. On being disturbed at such times, it pitches down into the brush and is instantly lost to view.

This is the bird that Thomas Jefferson wrote to Wilson about, greatly exciting the latter's curiosity. Wilson was just then upon the threshold of his career as an ornithologist, and had made a drawing of the Canada jay which he sent to the President. It was a new bird, and in reply Jefferson called his attention to a "curious bird" which was everywhere to be heard, but scarcely ever to be seen. He had for twenty years interested the young sportsmen of his neighborhood to shoot one for him, but without success. "It is in all the forests, from spring to fall," he says in his letter, "and never but on the tops of the tallest trees, from which it perpetually serenades us with some of the sweetest notes, and as clear as those of the nightingale. I have followed it for miles, without ever but once getting a good view of it. It is of the size and make of the mockingbird, lightly thrush-colored on the back, and a grayish white on the breast and belly. Mr. Randolph, my son-in-law, was in possession of one which had been shot by a neighbor," etc. Randolph pronounced it a flycatcher, which was a good way wide of the mark. Jefferson must have seen only the female, after all his tramp, from his description of the color; but he was doubtless following his own great thoughts more than the bird, else

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he would have had an earlier view. The bird was not a new one, but was well known then as the ground-robin. The President put Wilson on the wrong scent by his erroneous description, and it was a long time before the latter got at the truth of the case. But Jefferson's letter is a good sample of those which specialists often receive from intelligent persons who have seen or heard something in their line very curious or entirely new, and who set the man of science agog by a description of the supposed novelty, — a description that generally fits the facts of the case about as well as your coat fits the chair-back. Strange and curious things in the air, and in the water, and in the earth beneath, are seen every day except by those who are looking for them, namely, the naturalists. When Wilson or Audubon gets his eye on the unknown bird, the illusion vanishes, and your phenomenon turns out to be one of the commonplaces of the fields or woods.

A prominent April bird, that one does not have to go to the woods or away from his own door to see and hear, is the hardy and ever-welcome meadow-lark. What a twang there is about this bird, and what vigor! It smacks of the soil. It is the winged embodiment of the spirit of our spring meadows. What emphasis in its "*z-d-t, z-d-t*," and what character in its long, piercing note! Its straight, tapering, sharp beak is typical of its voice. Its note goes like a shaft from a crossbow; it is a little too sharp

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and piercing when near at hand, but, heard in the proper perspective, it is eminently melodious and pleasing. It is one of the major notes of the fields at this season. In fact, it easily dominates all others. "*Spring o' the year! spring o' the year!*" it says, with a long-drawn breath, a little plaintive, but not complaining or melancholy. At times it indulges in something much more intricate and lark-like while hovering on the wing in midair, but a song is beyond the compass of its instrument, and the attempt usually ends in a breakdown. A clear, sweet, strong, high-keyed note, uttered from some knoll or rock, or stake in the fence, is its proper vocal performance. It has the build and walk and flight of the quail and the grouse. It gets up before you in much the same manner, and falls an easy prey to the crack shot. Its yellow breast, surmounted by a black crescent, it need not be ashamed to turn to the morning sun, while its coat of mottled gray is in perfect keeping with the stubble amid which it walks.

The two lateral white quills in its tail seem strictly in character. These quills spring from a dash of scorn and defiance in the bird's make-up. By the aid of these, it can almost emit a flash as it struts about the fields and jerks out its sharp notes. They give a rayed, a definite and piquant expression to its movements. This bird is not properly a lark, but a starling, say the ornithologists, though it is lark-like in its habits, being a walker and entirely a

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ground-bird. Its color also allies it to the true lark. I believe there is no bird in the English or European fields that answers to this hardy pedestrian of our meadows. He is a true American, and his note one of our characteristic April sounds.

Another marked April note, proceeding sometimes from the meadows, but more frequently from the rough pastures and borders of the woods, is the call of the high-hole, or golden-shafted woodpecker. It is quite as strong as that of the meadowlark, but not so long-drawn and piercing. It is a succession of short notes rapidly uttered, as if the bird said "*if-if-if-if-if-if-if*." The notes of the ordinary downy and hairy woodpeckers suggest, in some way, the sound of a steel punch; but that of the high-hole is much softer, and strikes on the ear with real springtime melody. The high-hole is not so much a wood-pecker as he is a ground-pecker. He subsists largely on ants and crickets, and does not appear till they are to be found.

In Solomon's description of spring, the voice of the turtle is prominent, but our turtle, or mourning dove, though it arrives in April, can hardly be said to contribute noticeably to the open-air sounds. Its call is so vague, and soft, and mournful, — in fact, so remote and diffused, — that few persons ever hear it at all.

Such songsters as the cow blackbird are noticeable at this season, though they take a back seat a little

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later. It utters a peculiarly liquid April sound. Indeed, one would think its crop was full of water, its notes so bubble up and regurgitate, and are delivered with such an apparent stomachic contraction. This bird is the only feathered polygamist we have. The females are greatly in excess of the males, and the latter are usually attended by three or four of the former. As soon as the other birds begin to build, they are on the *qui vive*, prowling about like gypsies, not to steal the young of others, but to steal their eggs into other birds' nests, and so shirk the labor and responsibility of hatching and rearing their own young. As these birds do not mate, and as therefore there can be little or no rivalry or competition between the males, one wonders—in view of Darwin's teaching—why one sex should have brighter and richer plumage than the other, which is the fact. The males are easily distinguished from the dull and faded females by their deep glossy-black coats.

The April of English literature corresponds nearly to our May. In Great Britain, the swallow and the cuckoo usually arrive by the middle of April; with us, their appearance is a week or two later. Our April, at its best, is a bright, laughing face under a hood of snow, like the English March, but presenting sharper contrasts, a greater mixture of smiles and tears and icy looks than are known to our ancestral climate. Indeed, Winter sometimes

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retraces his steps in this month, and unburdens himself of the snows that the previous cold has kept back; but we are always sure of a number of radiant, equable days, — days that go before the bud, when the sun embraces the earth with fervor and determination. How his beams pour into the woods till the mould under the leaves is warm and emits an odor! The waters glint and sparkle, the birds gather in groups, and even those unused to singing find a voice. On the streets of the cities, what a flutter, what bright looks and gay colors! I recall one preëminent day of this kind last April. I made a note of it in my note-book. The earth seemed suddenly to emerge from a wilderness of clouds and chilliness into one of these blue sunlit spaces. How the voyagers rejoiced! Invalids came forth, old men sauntered down the street, stocks went up, and the political outlook brightened.

Such days bring out the last of the hibernating animals. The woodchuck unrolls and creeps out of his den to see if his clover has started yet. The torpidity leaves the snakes and the turtles, and they come forth and bask in the sun. There is nothing so small, nothing so great, that it does not respond to these celestial spring days, and give the pendulum of life a fresh start.

April is also the month of the new furrow. As soon as the frost is gone and the ground settled, the plow is started upon the hill, and at each bout I see

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its brightened mould-board flash in the sun. Where the last remnants of the snowdrift lingered yesterday the plow breaks the sod to-day. Where the drift was deepest the grass is pressed flat, and there is a deposit of sand and earth blown from the fields to windward. Line upon line the turf is reversed, until there stands out of the neutral landscape a ruddy square visible for miles, or until the breasts of the broad hills glow like the breasts of the robins.

Then who would not have a garden in April? to rake together the rubbish and burn it up, to turn over the renewed soil, to scatter the rich compost, to plant the first seed, or bury the first tuber! It is not the seed that is planted, any more than it is I that is planted; it is not the dry stalks and weeds that are burned up, any more than it is my gloom and regrets that are consumed. An April smoke makes a clean harvest.

I think April is the best month to be born in. One is just in time, so to speak, to catch the first train, which is made up in this month. My April chickens always turn out best. They get an early start; they have rugged constitutions. Late chickens cannot stand the heavy dews, or withstand the predaceous hawks. In April all nature starts with you. You have not come out of your hibernaculum too early or too late; the time is ripe, and, if you do not keep pace with the rest, why, the fault is not in the season.

V

SPRING POEMS

THERE is no month oftener on the tongues of the poets than April. It is the initiative month; it opens the door of the seasons; the interest and expectations of the untried, the untasted, lurk in it

“From you have I been absent in the spring,”

says Shakespeare in one of his sonnets,—

“When proud-pied April, dressed in all his trim,

Hath put a spirit of youth in everything,

That heavy Saturn laughed and leaped with him.”

The following poem, from Tennyson’s “In Memoriam,” might be headed “April,” and serve as descriptive of parts of our season:—

“Now fades the last long streak of snow,

Now bourgeons every maze of quick

About the flowering squares, and thick

By ashen roots the violets blow.

“Now rings the woodland loud and long,

The distance takes a lovelier hue,

And drowned in yonder living blue

The lark becomes a sightless song.

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"Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,
The flocks are whiter down the vale,
And milkier every milky sail
On winding stream or distant sea;

"Where now the sea-mew pipes, or dives
In yonder greening gleam, and fly
The happy birds, that change their sky
To build and brood; that live their lives

"From land to land; and in my breast
Spring wakens too; and my regret
Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms like the rest."

In the same poem the poet asks: —

"Can trouble live with April days?"

Yet they are not all jubilant chords that this season awakens. Occasionally there is an undertone of vague longing and sadness, akin to that which one experiences in autumn. Hope for a moment assumes the attitude of memory and stands with reverted look. The haze, that in spring as well as in fall sometimes descends and envelops all things, has in it in some way the sentiment of music, of melody, and awakens pensive thoughts. Elizabeth Akers, in her "April," has recognized and fully expressed this feeling. I give the first and last stanzas: —

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"The strange, sweet days are here again,
The happy-mournful days;
The songs which trembled on our lips
Are half complaint, half praise.

"Swing, robin, on the budded sprays,
And sing your blithest tune; —
Help us across these homesick days
Into the joy of June!"

This poet has also given a touch of spring in her "March," which, however, should be written "April" in the New England climate: —

"The brown buds thicken on the trees,
Unbound, the free streams sing,
As March leads forth across the leas
The wild and windy spring.

"Where in the fields the melted snow
Leaves hollows warm and wet,
Ere many days will sweetly blow
The first blue violet."

But on the whole the poets have not been eminently successful in depicting spring. The humid season, with its tender, melting blue sky, its fresh, earthy smells, its new furrow, its few simple signs and awakenings here and there, and its strange feeling of unrest, — how difficult to put its charms into words! None of the so-called pastoral poets have succeeded in doing it. That is the best part of spring

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which escapes a direct and matter-of-fact description of her. There is more of spring in a line or two of Chaucer and Spenser than in the elaborate portraits of her by Thomson or Pope, because the former had spring in their hearts, and the latter only in their inkhorns. Nearly all Shakespeare's songs are spring songs, — full of the banter, the frolic, and the love-making of the early season. What an unloosed current, too, of joy and fresh new life and appetite in Burns!

In spring everything has such a margin! there are such spaces of silence! The influences are at work underground. Our delight is in a few things. The drying road is enough; a single wild flower, the note of the first bird, the partridge drumming in the April woods, the restless herds, the sheep steering for the uplands, the cow lowing in the highway or hiding her calf in the bushes, the first fires, the smoke going up through the shining atmosphere, from the burning of rubbish in gardens and old fields, — each of these simple things fills the breast with yearning and delight, for they are tokens of the spring. The best spring poems have this singleness and sparseness. Listen to Solomon. "For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land." In Wordsworth are some things that breathe the air of spring. These

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lines, written in early spring, afford a good specimen: —

“I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.”

“To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

“Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 't is my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

“The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure:
But the least motion which they made
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.”

Or these from another poem, written in his usual study, “Out-of-Doors,” and addressed to his sister: —

“It is the first mild day of March,
Each minute sweeter than before;
The redbreast sings from the tall larch
That stands beside the door.

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“There is a blessing in the air,
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field.

“Love, now a universal birth,
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth;
It is the hour of feeling.

“One moment now may give us more
Than years of toiling reason:
Our minds shall drink at every pore
The spirit of the season.”

It is the simplicity of such lines, like the naked branches of the trees or the unclothed fields, and the spring-like depth of feeling and suggestion they hold, that make them so appropriate to this season.

At this season I often find myself repeating these lines of his also: —

“My heart leaps up, when I behold
A rainbow in the sky;
So was it, when my life began;
So is it, now I am a man;
So be it, when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!”

Though there are so few good poems especially

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commemorative of the spring, there have no doubt been spring poets, — poets with such newness and fullness of life, and such quickening power, that the world is re-created, as it were, beneath their touch. Of course this is in a measure so with all real poets. But the difference I would indicate may exist between poets of the same or nearly the same magnitude. Thus, in this light Tennyson is an autumnal poet, mellow and dead-ripe, and was so from the first; while Wordsworth has much more of the spring in him, is nearer the bone of things and to primitive conditions.

Among the old poems, one which seems to me to have much of the charm of springtime upon it is the story of Cupid and Psyche in Apuleius. The songs, gambols, and wooings of the early birds are not more welcome and suggestive. How graceful and airy, and yet what a tender, profound, human significance it contains! But the great vernal poem, doubly so in that it is the expression of the springtime of the race, the boyhood of man as well, is the *Iliad* of Homer. What faith, what simple wonder, what unconscious strength, what beautiful savagery, what magnanimous enmity, — a very paradise of war!

Though so young a people, there is not much of the feeling of spring in any of our books. The muse of our poets is wise rather than joyous. There is no excess or extravagance or unruliness in her.

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There are spring sounds and tokens in Emerson's
"May-Day:" —

"April cold with dropping rain
Willows and lilacs brings again,
The whistle of returning birds,
And trumpet-lowing of the herds.
The scarlet maple-keys betray
What potent blood hath modest May,
What fiery force the earth renews,
The wealth of forms, the flush of hues;
What joy in rosy waves outpoured
Flows from the heart of Love, the Lord."

But this is not spring in the blood. Among the works of our young and rising poets, I am not certain but that Mr. Gilder's "New Day" is entitled to rank as a spring poem in the sense in which I am speaking. It is full of gayety and daring, and full of the reckless abandon of the male bird when he is winning his mate. It is full also of the tantalizing suggestiveness, the half-lights and shades, of April and May.

Of prose poets who have the charm of the spring-time upon them, the best recent example I know of is Björnson, the Norwegian romancist. What especially makes his books spring-like is their freshness and sweet good faith. There is also a reticence and an unwrought suggestiveness about them that is like the promise of buds and early flowers. Of

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Turgenieff, the Russian, much the same thing might be said. His stories are simple and elementary, and have none of the elaborate hair-splitting and forced hot-house character of the current English or American novel. They spring from stronger, more healthful and manly conditions, and have a force in them that is like a rising, incoming tide.

VI

OUR RURAL DIVINITY

I WONDER that Wilson Flagg did not include the cow among his "Picturesque Animals," for that is where she belongs. She has not the classic beauty of the horse, but in picture-making qualities she is far ahead of him. Her shaggy, loose-jointed body; her irregular, sketchy outlines, like those of the landscape, -- the hollows and ridges, the slopes and prominences; her tossing horns, her bushy tail, her swinging gait, her tranquil, ruminating habits, -- all tend to make her an object upon which the artist eye loves to dwell. The artists are forever putting her into pictures, too. In rural landscape scenes she is an important feature. Behold her grazing in the pastures and on the hillsides, or along banks of streams, or ruminating under wide-spreading trees, or standing belly-deep in the creek or pond, or lying upon the smooth places in the quiet summer afternoon, the day's grazing done, and waiting to be summoned home to be milked; and again in the twilight lying upon the level summit of the hill, or where the sward is thickest and softest; or in winter a herd of them filing along toward the

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spring to drink, or being "foddered" from the stack in the field upon the new snow, — surely the cow is a picturesque animal, and all her goings and comings are pleasant to behold.

I looked into Hamerton's clever book on the domestic animals also, expecting to find my divinity duly celebrated, but he passes her by and contemplates the bovine qualities only as they appear in the ox and the bull.

Neither have the poets made much of the cow, but have rather dwelt upon the steer, or the ox yoked to the plow. I recall this touch from Emerson: —

"The heifer that lows in the upland farm,
Far heard, lows not thine ear to charm."

But the ear is charmed, nevertheless, especially if it be not too near, and the air be still and dense, or hollow, as the farmer says. And again, if it be springtime and she task that powerful bellows of hers to its utmost capacity, how round the sound is, and how far it goes over the hills!

The cow has at least four tones or lows. First, there is her alarmed or distressed low when deprived of her calf, or when separated from her mates, — her low of affection. Then there is her call of hunger, a petition for food, sometimes full of impatience, or her answer to the farmer's call, full of eagerness. Then there is that peculiar frenzied bawl she utters

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on smelling blood, which causes every member of the herd to lift its head and hasten to the spot, — the native cry of the clan. When she is gored or in great danger she bawls also, but that is different. And lastly, there is the long, sonorous volley she lets off on the hills or in the yard, or along the highway, and which seems to be expressive of a kind of unrest and vague longing, — the longing of the imprisoned Io for her lost identity. She sends her voice forth so that every god on Mount Olympus can hear her plaint. She makes this sound in the morning, especially in the spring, as she goes forth to graze.

One of our rural poets, Myron Benton, whose verse often has the flavor of sweet cream, has written some lines called "Rumination," in which the cow is the principal figure, and with which I am permitted to adorn my theme. The poet first gives his attention to a little brook that "breaks its shallow gossip" at his feet and "drowns the oriole's voice:" —

"But moveth not that wise and ancient cow,
Who chews her juicy cud so languid now
Beneath her favorite elm, whose drooping bough
Lulls all but inward vision fast asleep:
But still, her tireless tail a pendulum sweep
Mysterious clock-work guides, and some hid pulley
Her drowsy cud, each moment, raises duly.

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“Of this great, wondrous world she has seen more
Than you, my little brook, and cropped its store
Of succulent grass on many a mead and lawn;
And strayed to distant uplands in the dawn.
And she has had some dark experience
Of graceless man’s ingratitude; and hence
Her ways have not been ways of pleasantness,
Nor all her paths of peace. But her distress
And grief she has lived past; your giddy round
Disturbs her not, for she is learned profound
In deep brahminical philosophy.
She chews the cud of sweetest reverie
Above your worldly prattle, brooklet merry,
Oblivious of all things sublunary.”

The cow figures in Grecian mythology, and in the Oriental literature is treated as a sacred animal. “The clouds are cows and the rain milk.” I remember what Herodotus says of the Egyptians’ worship of heifers and steers; and in the traditions of the Celtic nations the cow is regarded as a divinity. In Norse mythology the milk of the cow And-humbla afforded nourishment to the Frost giants, and it was she that licked into being and into shape a god, the father of Odin. If anything could lick a god into shape, certainly the cow could do it. You may see her perform this office for young Taurus any spring. She licks him out of the fogs and bewilderments and uncertainties in which he finds himself on first landing upon these shores, and up onto

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his feet in an incredibly short time. Indeed, that potent tongue of hers can almost make the dead alive any day, and the creative lick of the old Scandinavian mother cow is only a large-lettered rendering of the commonest facts.

The horse belongs to the fiery god Mars. He favors war, and is one of its oldest, most available, and most formidable engines. The steed is clothed with thunder, and smells the battle from afar; but the cattle upon a thousand hills denote that peace and plenty bear sway in the land. The neighing of the horse is a call to battle; but the lowing of old Brockleface in the valley brings the golden age again. The savage tribes are never without the horse; the Scythians are all mounted; but the cow would tame and humanize them. When the Indians will cultivate the cow, I shall think their civilization fairly begun. Recently, when the horses were sick with the epizoötic, and the oxen came to the city and helped to do their work, what an Arcadian air again filled the streets! But the dear old oxen, — how awkward and distressed they looked! Juno wept in the face of every one of them. The horse is a true citizen, and is entirely at home in the paved streets; but the ox, — what a complete embodiment of all rustic and rural things! Slow, deliberate, thick-skinned, powerful, hulky, ruminating, fragrant-breathed, when he came to town the spirit and suggestion of all Georgics and Bucolics came with him.

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O citizen, was it only a plodding, unsightly brute that went by? Was there no chord in your bosom, long silent, that sweetly vibrated at the sight of that patient, Herculean couple? Did you smell no hay or cropped herbage, see no summer pastures with circles of cool shade, hear no voice of herds among the hills? They were very likely the only horses your grandfather ever had. Not much trouble to harness and unharness them. Not much vanity on the road in those days. They did all the work on the early pioneer farm. They were the gods whose rude strength first broke the soil. They could live where the moose and the deer could. If there was no clover or timothy to be had, then the twigs of the basswood and birch would do. Before there were yet fields given up to grass, they found ample pasturage in the woods. Their wide-spreading horns gleamed in the duskiess, and their paths and the paths of the cows became the future roads and highways, or even the streets of great cities.

All the descendants of Odin show a bovine trace, and cherish and cultivate the cow. In Norway she is a great feature. Professor Boyesen describes what he calls the *sæter*, the spring migration of the dairy and dairymaids, with all the appurtenances of butter and cheese making, from the valleys to the distant plains upon the mountains, where the grass keeps fresh and tender till fall. It is the great event of the year in all the rural districts. Nearly

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the whole family go with the cattle and remain with them. At evening the cows are summoned home with a long horn, called the *loor*, in the hands of the milkmaid. The whole herd comes winding down the mountain-side toward the *sæter* in obedience to the mellow blast.

What were those old Vikings but thick-hided bulls that delighted in nothing so much as goring each other? And has not the charge of beefiness been brought much nearer home to us than that? But about all the northern races there is something that is kindred to cattle in the best sense, — something in their art and literature that is essentially pastoral, sweet-breathed, continent, dispassionate, ruminating, wide-eyed, soft-voiced, — a charm of kine, the virtue of brutes.

The cow belongs more especially to the northern peoples, to the region of the good, green grass. She is the true *grazing* animal. That broad, smooth, always dewy nose of hers is just the suggestion of greensward. She caresses the grass; she sweeps off the ends of the leaves; she reaps it with the soft sickle of her tongue. She crops close, but she does not bruise or devour the turf like the horse. She is the sward's best friend, and will make it thick and smooth as a carpet.

“The turfey mountains where live the nibbling sheep” are not for her. Her muzzle is too blunt; then she

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does not *bite* as do the sheep ; she has no upper teeth ; she *crops*. But on the lower slopes, and margins, and rich bottoms, she is at home. Where the daisy and the buttercup and clover bloom, and where corn will grow, is her proper domain. The agriculture of no country can long thrive without her. Not only a large part of the real, but much of the potential, wealth of the land is wrapped up in her.

Then the cow has given us some good words and hints. How could we get along without the parable of the cow that gave a good pail of milk and then kicked it over ? One could hardly keep house without it. Or the parable of the cream and the skimmed milk, or of the buttered bread ? We know, too, through her aid, what the horns of the dilemma mean, and what comfort there is in the juicy cud of reverie.

I have said the cow has not been of much service to the poets, and yet I remember that Jean Ingelow could hardly have managed her "High Tide" without "Whitefoot" and "Lightfoot" and "Cusha! Cusha! Cusha! calling;" or Trowbridge his "Evening at the Farm," in which the real call of the American farm-boy of "Co', boss! Co', boss! Co', Co'," makes a very musical refrain.

Tennyson's charming "Milking Song" is another flower of poesy that has sprung up in my divinity's footsteps.

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What a variety of individualities a herd of cows presents when you have come to know them all, not only in form and color, but in manners and disposition! Some are timid and awkward, and the butt of the whole herd. Some remind you of deer. Some have an expression in the face like certain persons you have known. A petted and well-fed cow has a benevolent and gracious look; an ill-used and poorly fed one, a pitiful and forlorn look. Some cows have a masculine or ox expression; others are extremely feminine. The latter are the ones for milk. Some cows will kick like a horse; some jump fences like deer. Every herd has its ring-leader, its unruly spirit, — one that plans all the mischief, and leads the rest through the fences into the grain or into the orchard. This one is usually quite different from the master spirit, the “boss of the yard.” The latter is generally the most peaceful and law-abiding cow in the lot, and the least bullying and quarrelsome. But she is not to be trifled with; her will is law; the whole herd give way before her, those that have crossed horns with her and those that have not, but yielded their allegiance without crossing. I remember such a one among my father’s milkers when I was a boy, — a slender-horned, deep-shouldered, large-uddered, dewlapped old cow that we always put first in the long stable, so she could not have a cow on each side of her to forage upon; for the master is yielded to

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no less in the stanchions than in the yard. She always had the first place anywhere. She had her choice of standing-room in the milking-yard, and when she wanted to lie down there or in the fields the best and softest spot was hers. When the herd were foddered from the stack or barn, or fed with pumpkins in the fall, she was always first served. Her demeanor was quiet but impressive. She never bullied or gored her mates, but literally ruled them with the breath of her nostrils. If any new-comer or ambitious younger cow, however, chafed under her supremacy, she was ever ready to make good her claims. And with what spirit she would fight when openly challenged! She was a whirlwind of pluck and valor; and not after one defeat or two defeats would she yield the championship. The boss cow, when overcome, seems to brood over her disgrace, and day after day will meet her rival in fierce combat.

A friend of mine, a pastoral philosopher, whom I have consulted in regard to the master cow, thinks it is seldom the case that one rules all the herd, if it number many, but that there is often one that will rule nearly all. "Curiously enough," he says, "a case like this will often occur: No. 1 will whip No. 2; No. 2 whips No. 3; and No. 3 whips No. 1; so around in a circle. This is not a mistake; it is often the case. I remember," he continued, "we once had feeding out of a large bin in the centre of

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the yard six cows who mastered right through in succession from No. 1 to No. 6; *but No. 6 paid off the score by whipping No. 1.* I often watched them when they were all trying to feed out of the box, and of course trying, dog-in-the-manger fashion, each to prevent any other she could. They would often get in the order to do it very systematically, since they could keep rotating about the box till the chain happened to get broken somewhere, when there would be confusion. Their mastership, you know, like that between nations, is constantly changing. There are always Napoleons who hold their own through many vicissitudes; but the ordinary cow is continually liable to lose her foothold. Some cow she has always despised, and has often sent tossing across the yard at her horns' ends, some pleasant morning will return the compliment and pay off old scores."

But my own observation has been that, in herds in which there have been no important changes for several years, the question of might gets pretty well settled, and some one cow becomes the acknowledged ruler.

The bully of the yard is never the master, but usually a second or third rate pusher that never loses an opportunity to hook those beneath her, or to gore the masters if she can get them in a tight place. If such a one can get loose in the stable, she is quite certain to do mischief. She delights

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to pause in the open bars and turn and keep those behind her at bay till she sees a pair of threatening horns pressing toward her, when she quickly passes on. As one cow masters all, so there is one cow that is mastered by all. These are the two extremes of the herd, the head and the tail. Between them are all grades of authority, with none so poor but hath some poorer to do her reverence.

The cow has evidently come down to us from a wild or semi-wild state; perhaps is a descendant of those wild, shaggy cattle of which a small band is still preserved in some nobleman's park in Scotland. Cuvier seems to have been of this opinion. One of the ways in which her wild instincts still crop out is the disposition she shows in spring to hide her calf, — a common practice among the wild herds. Her wild nature would be likely to come to the surface at this crisis if ever; and I have known cows that practiced great secrecy in dropping their calves. As their time approached, they grew restless, a wild and excited look was upon them; and if left free, they generally set out for the woods, or for some other secluded spot. After the calf is several hours old, and has got upon its feet and had its first meal, the dam by some sign commands it to lie down and remain quiet while she goes forth to feed. If the calf is approached at such time, it plays "possum," pretends to be dead or asleep, till, on finding this ruse does not succeed, it mounts to its

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feet, bleats loudly and fiercely, and charges desperately upon the intruder. But it recovers from this wild scare in a little while, and never shows signs of it again.

The habit of the cow, also, in eating the placenta, looks to me like a vestige of her former wild instincts, — the instinct to remove everything that would give the wild beasts a clew or a scent, and so attract them to her helpless young.

How wise and sagacious the cows become that run upon the street, or pick their living along the highway! The mystery of gates and bars is at last solved to them. They ponder over them by night, they lurk about them by day, till they acquire a new sense, — till they become *en rapport* with them and know when they are open and unguarded. The garden gate, if it open into the highway at any point, is never out of the mind of these roadsters, or out of their calculations. They calculate upon the chances of its being left open a certain number of times in the season ; and if it be but once, and only for five minutes, your cabbage and sweet corn suffer. What villager, or countryman either, has not been awakened at night by the squeaking and crunching of those piratical jaws under the window, or in the direction of the vegetable patch? I have had the cows, after they had eaten up my garden, break into the stable where my own milcher was tied, and gore her and devour her meal. Yes, life

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presents but one absorbing problem to the street cow, and that is how to get into your garden. She catches glimpses of it over the fence or through the pickets, and her imagination or her epigastrium is inflamed. When the spot is surrounded by a high board fence, I think I have seen her peeping at the cabbages through a knothole. At last she learns to open the gate. It is a great triumph of bovine wit. She does it with her horn or her nose, or may be with her ever-ready tongue. I doubt if she has ever yet penetrated the mystery of the newer patent fastenings ; but the old-fashioned thumb-latch she can see through, give her time enough.

A large, lank, muley or polled cow used to annoy me in this way when I was a dweller in a certain pastoral city. I more than half suspected she was turned in by some one ; so one day I watched. Presently I heard the gate-latch rattle ; the gate swung open, and in walked the old buffalo. On seeing me she turned and ran like a horse. I then fastened the gate on the inside and watched again. After long waiting the old cow came quickly round the corner and approached the gate. She lifted the latch with her nose. Then, as the gate did not move, she lifted it again and again. Then she gently nudged it. Then, the obtuse gate not taking the hint, she butted it gently, then harder and still harder, till it rattled again. At this juncture I emerged from my hiding-place, when the old villain

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scampered off with great precipitation. She knew she was trespassing, and she had learned that there were usually some swift penalties attached to this pastime.

I have owned but three cows and loved but one. That was the first one, Chloe, a bright red, curly-pated, golden-skinned Devonshire cow, that an ocean steamer landed for me upon the banks of the Potomac one bright May Day many clover summers ago. She came from the north, from the pastoral regions of the Catskills, to graze upon the broad commons of the national capital. I was then the fortunate and happy lessee of an old place with an acre of ground attached, almost within the shadow of the dome of the Capitol. Behind a high but aged and decrepit board fence I indulged my rural and unclerical tastes. I could look up from my homely tasks and cast a potato almost in the midst of that cataract of marble steps that flows out of the north wing of the patriotic pile. Ah! when that creaking and sagging back gate closed behind me in the evening, I was happy; and when it opened for my egress thence in the morning, I was not happy. Inside that gate was a miniature farm, redolent of homely, primitive life, a tumble-down house and stables and implements of agriculture and horticulture, broods of chickens, and growing pumpkins, and a thousand antidotes to the weariness of an artificial life. Outside of it were the marble and iron palaces, the

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paved and blistering streets, and the high, vacant mahogany desk of a government clerk. In that ancient inclosure I took an earth bath twice a day. I planted myself as deep in the soil as I could, to restore the normal tone and freshness of my system, impaired by the above-mentioned government mahogany. I have found there is nothing like the earth to draw the various social distempers out of one. The blue devils take flight at once if they see you mean to bury them and make compost of them. Emerson intimates that the scholar had better not try to have two gardens; but I could never spend an hour hoeing up dock and red-root and twitch-grass without in some way getting rid of many weeds and fungi, unwholesome growths, that a petty indoor life is forever fostering in my moral and intellectual nature.

But the finishing touch was not given till Chloe came. She was the jewel for which this homely setting waited. My agriculture had some object then. The old gate never opened with such alacrity as when she paused before it. How we waited for her coming! Should I send Drewer, the colored patriarch, for her? No; the master of the house himself should receive Juno at the capital.

"One cask for you," said the clerk, referring to the steamer bill of lading.

"Then I hope it's a cask of milk," I said. "I expected a cow."

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“One cask, it says here.”

“Well, let’s see it; I’ll warrant it has horns and is tied by a rope;” which proved to be the case, for there stood the only object that bore my name, chewing its cud, on the forward deck. How she liked the voyage I could not find out; but she seemed to relish so much the feeling of solid ground beneath her feet once more, that she led me a lively step all the way home. She cut capers in front of the White House, and tried twice to wind me up in the rope as we passed the Treasury. She kicked up her heels on the broad avenue, and became very coltish as she came under the walls of the Capitol. But that night the long-vacant stall in the old stable was filled, and the next morning the coffee had met with a change of heart. I had to go out twice with the lantern and survey my treasure before I went to bed. Did she not come from the delectable mountains, and did I not have a sort of filial regard for her as toward my foster-mother?

This was during the Arcadian age at the capital, before the easy-going Southern ways had gone out and the prim new Northern ways had come in, and when the domestic animals were treated with distinguished consideration and granted the freedom of the city. There was a charm of cattle in the street and upon the commons; goats cropped your rose-bushes through the pickets, and nooned upon your front porch; and pigs dreamed Arcadian dreams

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under your garden fence, or languidly frescoed it with pigments from the nearest pool. It was a time of peace; it was the poor man's golden age. Your cow, your goat, your pig, led vagrant, wandering lives, and picked up a subsistence wherever they could, like the bees, which was almost everywhere. Your cow went forth in the morning and came home fraught with milk at night, and you never troubled yourself where she went or how far she roamed.

Chloe took very naturally to this kind of life. At first I had to go with her a few times and pilot her to the nearest commons, and then I left her to her own wit, which never failed her. What adventures she had, what acquaintances she made, how far she wandered, I never knew. I never came across her in my walks or rambles. Indeed, on several occasions I thought I would look her up and see her feeding in national pastures, but I never could find her. There were plenty of cows, but they were all strangers. But punctually, between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, her white horns would be seen tossing above the gate and her impatient low be heard. Sometimes, when I turned her forth in the morning, she would pause and apparently consider which way she would go. Should she go toward Kendall Green to-day, or follow the Tiber, or over by the Big Spring, or out around Lincoln Hospital? She seldom reached a conclusion

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till she had stretched forth her neck and blown a blast on her trumpet that awoke the echoes in the very lantern on the dome of the Capitol. Then, after one or two licks, she would disappear around the corner. Later in the season, when the grass was parched or poor on the commons, and the corn and cabbage tempting in the garden, Chloe was loath to depart in the morning, and her deliberations were longer than ever, and very often I had to aid her in coming to a decision.

For two summers she was a wellspring of pleasure and profit in my farm of one acre, when, in an evil moment, I resolved to part with her and try another. In an evil moment I say, for from that time my luck in cattle left me. The goddess never forgave me the execution of that rash and cruel resolve.

The day is indelibly stamped on my memory when I exposed my Chloe for sale in the public market-place. It was in November, a bright, dreamy, Indian summer day. A sadness oppressed me, not unmingled with guilt and remorse. An old Irish woman came to the market also with her pets to sell, a sow and five pigs, and took up a position next me. We condoled with each other; we bewailed the fate of our darlings together; we berated in chorus the white-aproned but blood-stained fraternity who prowled about us. When she went away for a moment I minded the pigs, and when I strolled about

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she minded my cow. How shy the innocent beast was of those carnal marketmen! How she would shrink away from them! When they put out a hand to feel her condition she would "scrooch" down her back, or bend this way or that, as if the hand were a branding-iron. So long as I stood by her head she felt safe — deluded creature! — and chewed the cud of sweet content; but the moment I left her side she seemed filled with apprehension, and followed me with her eyes, lowing softly and entreatingly till I returned.

At last the money was counted out for her, and her rope surrendered to the hand of another. How that last look of alarm and incredulity, which I caught as I turned for a parting glance, went to my heart!

Her stall was soon filled, or partly filled, and this time with a native, — a specimen of what may be called the cornstalk breed of Virginia; a slender, furtive, long-gear'd heifer just verging on cowhood, that in spite of my best efforts would wear a pinched and hungry look. She evidently inherited a humped back. It was a family trait, and evidence of the purity of her blood. For the native blooded cow of Virginia, from shivering over half rations of cornstalks in the open air during those bleak and windy winters, and roaming over those parched fields in summer, has come to have some marked features. For one thing, her pedal extremities seem length-

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ened; for another, her udder does not impede her traveling; for a third, her backbone inclines strongly to the curve; then, she despiseth hay. This last is a sure test. Offer a thorough-bred Virginia cow hay, and she will laugh in your face; but rattle the husks or shucks, and she knows you to be her friend.

The new-comer even declined corn-meal at first. She eyed it furtively, then sniffed it suspiciously, but finally discovered that it bore some relation to her native "shucks," when she fell to eagerly.

I cherish the memory of this cow, however, as the most affectionate brute I ever knew. Being deprived of her calf, she transferred her affections to her master, and would fain have made a calf of him, lowing in the most piteous and inconsolable manner when he was out of her sight, hardly forgetting her grief long enough to eat her meal, and entirely neglecting her beloved husks. Often in the middle of the night she would set up that sonorous lamentation, and continue it till sleep was chased from every eye in the household. This generally had the effect of bringing the object of her affection before her, but in a mood anything but filial or comforting. Still, at such times a kick seemed a comfort to her, and she would gladly have kissed the rod that was the instrument of my midnight wrath.

But her tender star was destined soon to a fatal

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eclipse. Being tied with too long a rope on one occasion during my temporary absence, she got her head into the meal-barrel, and stopped not till she had devoured nearly half a bushel of dry meal. The singularly placid and benevolent look that beamed from the meal-besmeared face when I discovered her was something to be remembered. For the first time, also, her spinal column came near assuming a horizontal line.

But the grist proved too much for her frail mill, and her demise took place on the third day, not of course without some attempt to relieve her on my part. I gave her, as is usual in such emergencies, everything I "could think of," and everything my neighbors could think of, besides some fearful prescriptions which I obtained from a German veterinary surgeon, but to no purpose. I imagined her poor maw distended and inflamed with the baking sodden mass which no physic could penetrate or enliven.

Thus ended my second venture in live-stock. My third, which followed sharp upon the heels of this disaster, was scarcely more of a success. This time I led to the altar a buffalo cow, as they call the "muley" down South, — a large, spotted, creamy-skinned cow, with a fine udder, that I persuaded a Jew drover to part with for ninety dollars. "Pag like a dish rack (rag)," said he, pointing to her udder after she had been milked. "You vill come pack

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and gif me the udder ten tollar" (for he had demanded an even hundred), he continued, "after you have had her a gouple of days." True, I felt like returning to him after a "gouple of days," but not to pay the other ten dollars. The cow proved to be as blind as a bat, though capable of counterfeiting the act of seeing to perfection. For did she not lift up her head and follow with her eyes a dog that scaled the fence and ran through the other end of the lot, and the next moment dash my hopes thus raised by trying to walk over a locust-tree thirty feet high? And when I set the bucket before her containing her first mess of meal, she missed it by several inches, and her nose brought up against the ground. Was it a kind of far-sightedness and near blindness? That was it, I think; she had genius, but not talent; she could see the man in the moon, but was quite oblivious to the man immediately in her front. Her eyes were telescopic and required a long range.

As long as I kept her in the stall, or confined to the inclosure, this strange eclipse of her sight was of little consequence. But when spring came, and it was time for her to go forth and seek her livelihood in the city's waste places, I was embarrassed. Into what remote corners or into what *terra incognita* might she not wander! There was little doubt but that she would drift around home in the course of the summer, or perhaps as often as every week or

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two; but could she be trusted to find her way back every night? Perhaps she could be taught. Perhaps her other senses were acute enough to compensate in a measure for her defective vision. So I gave her lessons in the topography of the country. I led her forth to graze for a few hours each day and led her home again. Then I left her to come home alone, which feat she accomplished very encouragingly. She came feeling her way along, stepping very high, but apparently a most diligent and interested sight-seer. But she was not sure of the right house when she got to it, though she stared at it very hard.

Again I turned her forth, and again she came back, her telescopic eyes apparently of some service to her. On the third day, there was a fierce thunder-storm late in the afternoon, and old buffalo did not come home. It had evidently scattered and bewildered what little wits she had. Being barely able to navigate those streets on a calm day, what could she be expected to do in a tempest?

After the storm had passed, and near sundown, I set out in quest of her, but could get no clew. I heard that two cows had been struck by lightning about a mile out on the commons. My conscience instantly told me that one of them was mine. It would be a fit closing of the third act of this pastoral drama. Thitherward I bent my steps, and there upon the smooth plain I beheld the scorched

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and swollen forms of two cows slain by thunderbolts, but neither of them had ever been mine.

The next day I continued the search, and the next, and the next. Finally I hoisted an umbrella over my head, for the weather had become hot, and set out deliberately and systematically to explore every foot of open common on Capitol Hill. I tramped many miles, and found every man's cow but my own, — some twelve or fifteen hundred, I should think. I saw many vagrant boys and Irish and colored women, nearly all of whom had seen a buffalo cow that very day that answered exactly to my description, but in such diverse and widely separate places that I knew it was no cow of mine. And it was astonishing how many times I was myself deceived; how many rumps or heads, or line backs or white flanks, I saw peeping over knolls, or from behind fences or other objects, that could belong to no cow but mine!

Finally I gave up the search, concluded the cow had been stolen, and advertised her, offering a reward. But days passed, and no tidings were obtained. Hope began to burn pretty low, — was indeed on the point of going out altogether, — when one afternoon, as I was strolling over the commons (for in my walks I still hovered about the scenes of my lost milcher), I saw the rump of a cow, over a grassy knoll, that looked familiar. Coming nearer, the beast lifted up her head; and, behold! it was

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she! only a few squares from home, where doubtless she had been most of the time. I had overshot the mark in my search. I had ransacked the far-off, and had neglected the near-at-hand, as we are so apt to do. But she was ruined as a milcher, and her history thenceforward was brief and touching!

VII

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IF there did not something else go to the making of literature besides mere literary parts, even the best of them, how long ago the old bards and the Biblical writers would have been superseded by the learned professors and the gentlemanly versifiers of later times! Is there to-day a popular poet, using the English language, who does not, in technical acquirements and in the artificial adjuncts of poetry, — rhyme, metre, melody, and especially sweet, dainty fancies, — surpass Europe's and Asia's loftiest and oldest? Indeed, so marked is the success of the latter-day poets in this respect, that any ordinary reader may well be puzzled, and ask, if the shaggy antique masters are poets, what are the refined and euphonious producers of our own day?

If we were to inquire what this something else is which is prerequisite to any deep and lasting success in literature, we should undoubtedly find that it is the man behind the book. It is the fashion of the day to attribute all splendid results to genius and culture. But genius and culture are not enough. "All other knowledge is hurtful to him who has not

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the science of honesty and goodness," says Montaigne. The quality of simple manhood, and the universal human traits which form the bond of union between man and man, — which form the basis of society, of the family, of government, of friendship, — are quite overlooked; and the credit is given to some special facility, or to brilliant and lucky hit. Does any one doubt that the great poets and artists are made up mainly of the most common universal human and heroic characteristics? — that in them, though working to other ends, is all that construct the soldier, the sailor, the farmer, the discoverer, the bringer-to-pass in any field, and that their work is good and enduring in proportion as it is saturated and fertilized by the qualities of these? Good human stock is the main dependence. No great poet ever appeared except from a race of good fighters, good eaters, good sleepers, good breeders. Literature dies with the decay of the *un*-literary element. It is not in the spirit of something far away in the clouds or under the moon, something ethereal, visionary, and anti-mundane, that Angelo, Dante, and Shakespeare work, but in the spirit of common Nature and of the homeliest facts; through these, and not away from them, the path of the creator lies.

It is no doubt this tendency, always more or less marked in highly refined and cultivated times, to forget or overlook the primary basic qualities, and to parade and make much of verbal and technical

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acquirements, that led Huxley to speak with such bitter scorn of the "sensual caterwauling of the literary classes," for this is not the only country in which books are produced that are a mere skin of elegant words blown up by copious literary gas.

In imaginative works, especially, much depends upon the quality of mere weight. A stern, material inertia is indispensable. It is like the immobility and the power of resistance of a piece of ordnance, upon which the force and efficacy of the projectile finally depend. In the most daring flights of the master, there is still something which remains indifferent and uncommitted, and which acts as reserve power, making the man always superior to his work. He must always leave the impression that if he wanted to pull harder or to fly higher he could easily do so. In Homer there is much that is not directly available for Homer's purposes as poet. This is his personality, — the real Homer, — which lies deeper than his talents and skill, and which works through these by indirections. This gives the authority; this is the unseen backer, which makes every promise good.

What depths can a man sound but his own, or what heights explore? "We carry within us," says Sir Thomas Browne, "the wonders we seek without us."

Indeed, there is a strict moral or ethical dependence of the capacity to conceive or to project great

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things upon the capacity to be or to do them. It is as true as any law of hydraulics or of statics, that the workmanship of a man can never rise above the level of his character. He can never adequately say or do anything greater than he himself is. There is no such thing, for instance, as deep insight into the mystery of Creation, without integrity and simplicity of character.

In the highest mental results and conditions the whole being sympathizes. The perception of a certain range of truth, such as is indicated by Plato, Hegel, Swedenborg, and which is very far from what is called "religious" or "moral," I should regard as the best testimonial that could be offered of a man's probity and essential nobility of soul. Is it possible to imagine a fickle, inconstant, or a sly, vain, mean person reading and appreciating Emerson? Think of the real men of science, the great geologists and astronomers, one opening up time, the other space! Shall mere intellectual acumen be accredited with these immense results? What noble pride, self-reliance, and continuity of character underlie Newton's deductions!

Only those books are for the making of men into which a man has gone in the making. Mere professional skill and sleight of hand, of themselves, are to be appraised as lightly in letters as in war or in government, or in any kind of leadership. Strong native qualities only avail in the long run; and the

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more these dominate over the artificial endowments, sloughing or dropping the latter in the final result, the more we are refreshed and enlarged. Who has not, at some period of his life, been captivated by the rhetoric and fine style of nearly all the popular authors of a certain sort, but at last waked up to discover that behind these brilliant names was no strong, loving man, but only a refined taste, a fertile invention, or a special talent of one kind or another.

Think of the lather of the modern novel, and the fashion-plate men and women that figure in it! What noble person has Dickens sketched, or has any novelist since Scott? The utter poverty of almost every current novelist, in any grand universal human traits in his own character, is shown in nothing more clearly than in the *kind* of interest the reader takes in his books. We are led along solely by the ingenuity of the plot, and a silly desire to see how the affair came out. What must be the effect, long continued, of this class of jugglers working upon the sympathies and the imagination of a nation of gestating women?

How the best modern novel collapses before the homely but immense human significance of Homer's celestial swineherd entertaining divine Ulysses, or even the solitary watchman in Æschylus' "Agamemnon," crouched, like a night-dog, on the roofs of the Atreidæ, waiting for the signal fires that should announce the fall of sacred Ilion!

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But one need not look long, even in contemporary British literature, to find a man. In the author of "Characteristics" and "Sartor Resartus" we surely encounter one of the true heroic cast. We are made aware that here is something more than a *littérateur*, something more than genius. Here is veracity, homely directness and sincerity, and strong primary idiosyncrasies. Here the man enters into the estimate of the author. There is no separating them, as there never is in great examples. A curious perversity runs through all, but in no way vitiates the result. In both his moral and intellectual nature, Carlyle seems made with a sort of stub and twist, like the best gun-barrels. The knotty and corrugated character of his sentences suits well the peculiar and intense activity of his mind. What a transition from his terse and sharply articulated pages, brimming with character and life, and a strange mixture of rage, humor, tenderness, poetry, philosophy, to the cold disbelief and municipal splendor of Macaulay! Nothing in Carlyle's contributions seems fortuitous. It all flows from a good and sufficient cause in the character of the man.

Every great man is, in a certain way, an Atlas, with the weight of the world upon him. And if one is to criticise at all, he may say that, if Carlyle had not been quite so conscious of this weight, his work would have been better done. Yet to whom do

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we owe more, even as Americans? Anti-democratic in his opinions, he surely is not so in spirit, or in the quality of his make. The nobility of labor and the essential nobility of man were never so effectively preached before. The deadliest enemy of democracy is not the warning or dissenting voice; but it is the spirit, rife among us, which would engraft upon our hardy Western stock the sickly and decayed standards of the expiring feudal world.

With two or three exceptions, there is little as yet in American literature that shows much advance beyond the merely conventional and scholastic, — little, I mean, in which one gets a whiff of the strong, unbreathed air of mountain or prairie, or a taste of rude, new power that is like the tonic of the sea. Thoreau occupies a niche by himself. Thoreau was not a great personality, yet his writings have a strong characteristic flavor. He is anti-scorbutic, like leeks and onions. He has reference, also, to the highest truths.

It is very likely true that our most native and original characters do not yet take to literature. It is, perhaps, too early in the day. Iron and lime have to pass through the vegetable before they can reach the higher organization of the animal, and maybe this Western nerve and heartiness will yet emerge on the intellectual plane. Let us hope that it will indeed be Western nerve and heartiness when it gets there, and not Eastern wit and epigram!

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In Abraham Lincoln we had a character of very marked and lofty type, the most suggestive study or sketch of the future American man that has yet appeared in our history. How broad, unconventional, and humane! How democratic! how adhesive! No fine arabesque carvings, but strong, unhewn, native traits, and deep lines of care, toil, and human sympathy. Lincoln's Gettysburg speech is one of the most genuine and characteristic utterances in our annals. It has the true antique simplicity and impressiveness. It came straight from the man, and is as sure an index of character as the living voice, or the physiognomy, or the personal presence. Indeed, it may be said of Mr. Lincoln's entire course while at the head of the nation, that no President, since the first, ever in his public acts allowed the man so fully to appear, or showed so little disposition to retreat behind the featureless political mask which seems to adhere to the idea of gubernatorial dignity.

It would be hardly fair to cite Everett's speech on the same occasion as a specimen of the opposite style, wherein ornate scholarship and the pride of talents dominate. Yet a stern critic would be obliged to say that, as an author, Everett allowed, for the most part, only the expurgated, complimenting, drawing-room man to speak; and that, considering the need of America to be kept virile and broad at all hazards, his contribution, both as man

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and writer, falls immeasurably short of Abraham Lincoln's.

What a noble specimen of its kind, and how free from any verbal tricks or admixture of literary sauce, is Thoreau's "Maine Woods"! And what a marked specimen of the opposite style is a certain other book I could mention in which these wild and grand scenes serve but as a medium to advertise the author's fund of classic lore!

Can there be any doubt about the traits and outward signs of a noble character, and is not the style of an author the manners of his soul?

Is there a lyceum lecturer in the country who is above manœuvring for the applause of his audience? or a writer who is willing to make himself of no account for the sake of what he has to say? Even in the best there is something of the air and manners of a performer on exhibition. The newspaper, or magazine, or book is a sort of raised platform upon which the advertiser advances before a gaping and expectant crowd. Truly, how well he *handles* his subject! He turns it over, and around, and inside out, and top-side down. He tosses it about; he twirls it; he takes it apart and puts it together again, and knows well beforehand where the applause will come in. Any reader, in taking up the antique authors, must be struck by the contrast.

"In Æschylus," says Landor, "there is no trickery, no trifling, no delay, no exposition, no garru-

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lity, no dogmatism, no declamation, no prosing, . . . but the loud, clear challenge, the firm, unstealthy step, of an erect, broad-breasted soldier."

On the whole, the old authors are better than the new. The real question of literature is not simplified by culture or a multiplication of books, as the conditions of life are always the same, and are not made one whit easier by all the myriads of men and women who have lived upon the globe. The standing want is never for more skill, but for newer, fresher power, — a more plentiful supply of arterial blood. The discoverer, or the historian, or the man of science, may begin where his predecessor left off, but the poet or any artist must go back for a fresh start. With him it is always the first day of creation, and he must begin at the stump or nowhere.

VIII

BEFORE BEAUTY

I

BEFORE genius is manliness, and before beauty is power. The Russian novelist and poet, Turgenieff, scattered all through whose works you will find unmistakable traits of greatness, makes one of his characters say, speaking of beauty, "The old masters, — they never hunted after it; it comes of itself into their compositions, God knows whence, from heaven or elsewhere. The whole world belonged to them, but we are unable to clasp its broad spaces ; our arms are too short."

From the same depth of insight come these lines from "Leaves of Grass," apropos of true poems: —

"They do not seek beauty — they are sought;
Forever touching them, or close upon them, follows
beauty, longing, fain, love-sick."

The Roman was perhaps the first to separate beauty from use, and to pursue it as ornament merely. He built his grand edifice, — its piers, its vaults, its walls of brick and concrete, — and then gave it a marble envelope copied from the Greek

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architecture. The latter could be stripped away, as in many cases it was by the hand of time, and leave the essentials of the structure nearly complete. Not so with the Greek: he did not seek the beautiful, he was beauty; his building had no ornament, it was all structure; in its beauty was the flower of necessity, the charm of inborn fitness and proportion. In other words, "his art was structure refined into beautiful forms, not beautiful forms superimposed upon structure," as with the Roman. And it is in Greek mythology, is it not, that Beauty is represented as riding upon the back of a lion? as she assuredly always does in their poetry and art, — rides upon power, or terror, or savage fate; not only rides upon, but is wedded and incorporated with it; hence the athletic desire and refreshment her coming imparts.

This is the invariable order of nature. Beauty without a rank material basis enfeebles. The world is not thus made; man is not thus begotten and nourished.

It comes to me there is something implied or understood when we look upon a beautiful object, that has quite as much to do with the impression made upon the mind as anything in the object itself; perhaps more. There is somehow an immense and undefined background of vast and unconscionable energy, as of earthquakes, and ocean storms, and cleft mountains, across which things of beauty play,

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and to which they constantly defer; and when this background is wanting, as it is in much current poetry, beauty sickens and dies, or at most has only a feeble existence.

Nature does nothing merely for beauty ; beauty follows as the inevitable result ; and the final impression of health and finish which her works make upon the mind is owing as much to those things which are not technically called beautiful as to those which are. The former give identity to the latter. The one is to the other what substance is to form, or bone to flesh. The beauty of nature includes all that is called beautiful, as its flower; and all that is not called beautiful, as its stalk and roots.

Indeed, when I go to the woods or the fields, or ascend to the hilltop, I do not seem to be gazing upon beauty at all, but to be breathing it like the air. I am not dazzled or astonished ; I am in no hurry to look lest it be gone. I would not have the litter and débris removed, or the banks trimmed, or the ground painted. What I enjoy is commensurate with the earth and sky itself. It clings to the rocks and trees ; it is kindred to the roughness and savagery ; it rises from every tangle and chasm ; it perches on the dry oak-stubs with the hawks and buzzards ; the crows shed it from their wings and weave it into their nests of coarse sticks ; the fox barks it, the cattle low it, and every mountain path leads to its haunts. I am not a spectator of, but a

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participator in it. It is not an adornment; its roots strike to the centre of the earth.

All true beauty in nature or in art is like the iridescent hue of mother-of-pearl, which is intrinsic and necessary, being the result of the arrangement of the particles, — the flowering of the mechanism of the shell; or like the beauty of health which comes out of and reaches back again to the bones and the digestion. There is no grace like the grace of strength. What sheer muscular gripe and power lie back of the firm, delicate notes of the great violinist! "Wit," says Heine, — and the same thing is true of beauty, — "isolated, is worthless. It is only endurable when it rests on a solid basis."

In fact, beauty as a separate and distinct thing does not exist. Neither can it be reached by any sorting or sifting or clarifying process. It is an experience of the mind, and must be preceded by certain conditions, just as light is an experience of the eye, and sound of the ear.

To attempt to manufacture beauty is as vain as to attempt to manufacture truth; and to give it to us in poems or any form of art, without a lion of some sort, a lion of truth or fitness or power, is to emasculate it and destroy its volition.

But current poetry is, for the most part, an attempt to do this very thing, to give us beauty without beauty's antecedents and foil. The poets want to spare us the annoyance of the beast. Since beauty

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is the chief attraction, why not have this part alone, pure and unadulterated, — why not pluck the plumage from the bird, the flower from its stalk, the moss from the rock, the shell from the shore, the honey-bag from the bee, and thus have in brief what pleases us? Hence, with rare exceptions, one feels, on opening the latest book of poems, like exclaiming, Well, here is the beautiful at last divested of everything else, — of truth, of power, of utility, — and one may add of beauty, too. It charms as color, or flowers, or jewels, or perfume charms — and that is the end of it.

It is ever present to the true artist, in his attempt to report nature, that every object as it stands in the circuit of cause and effect has a history which involves its surroundings, and that the depth of the interest which it awakens in us is in proportion as its integrity in this respect is preserved. In nature we are prepared for any opulence of color or of vegetation, or freak of form, or display of any kind, because of the preponderance of the common, ever-present feature of the earth. The foil is always at hand. In like manner in the master poems we are never surfeited with mere beauty.

Woe to any artist who disengages Beauty from the wide background of rudeness, darkness, and strength, — and disengages her from absolute nature! The mild and beneficent aspects of nature, — what gulfs and abysses of power underlie them!

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The great shaggy, barbaric earth, — yet the summing-up, the plenum, of all we know or can know of beauty! So the orbic poems of the world have a foundation as of the earth itself, and are beautiful because they are something else first. Homer chose for his groundwork War, clinching, tearing, tugging war; in Dante, it is Hell; in Milton, Satan and the Fall; in Shakespeare, it is the fierce Feudal world, with its towering and kingly personalities; in Byron, it is Revolt and diabolic passion. When we get to Tennyson, the lion is a good deal tamed, but he is still there in the shape of the proud, haughty, and manly Norman, and in many forms yet stimulates the mind.

The perception of cosmical beauty comes by a vital original process. It is in some measure a creative act, and those works that rest upon it make demands — perhaps extraordinary ones — upon the reader or the beholder. We regard mere surface glitter, or mere verbal sweetness, in a mood entirely passive, and with a pleasure entirely profitless. The beauty of excellent stage scenery seems much more obvious and easy of apprehension than the beauty of trees and hills themselves, inasmuch as the act of association in the mind is much easier and cheaper than the act of original perception.

Only the greatest works in any department afford any explanation of this wonder we call nature, or aid the mind in arriving at correct notions con-

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cerning it. To copy here and there a line or a trait is no explanation; but to translate nature into another language — to bridge it to us, to repeat in some sort the act of creation itself — is the crowning triumph of poetic art.

II

After the critic has enumerated all the stock qualities of the poet, as taste, fancy, melody, it remains to be said that unless there is something in him that is *living identity*, something analogous to the growing, pushing, reproducing forces of nature, all the rest in the end pass for but little.

This is perhaps what the German critic, Lessing, really means by *action*, for true poems are more like deeds, expressive of something behind, more like acts of heroism or devotion, or like personal character, than like thoughts or intellections.

All the master poets have in their work an interior, chemical, assimilative property, a sort of gastric juice which dissolves thought and form, and holds in vital fusion religions, times, races, and the theory of their own construction, flaming up with electric and defiant power, — power without any admixture of resisting form, as in a living organism.

There are in nature two types or forms, the cell and the crystal. One means the organic, the other the inorganic; one means growth, development, life; the other means reaction, solidification, rest. The

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hint and model of all creative works is the cell; critical, reflective, and philosophical works are nearer akin to the crystal; while there is much good literature that is neither the one nor the other distinctively, but which in a measure touches and includes both. But crystallic beauty or cut and polished gems of thought, the result of the reflex rather than the direct action of the mind, we do not expect to find in the best poems, though they may be most prized by specially intellectual persons. In the immortal poems the solids are very few, or do not appear at all as solids, — as lime and iron, — any more than they do in organic nature, in the flesh of the peach or the apple. The main thing in every living organism is the vital fluids: seven tenths of man is water; and seven tenths of Shakespeare is passion, emotion, — fluid humanity. Out of this arise his forms, as Venus arose out of the sea, and as man is daily built up out of the liquids of the body. We cannot taste, much less assimilate, a solid until it becomes a liquid; and your great idea, your sermon or moral, lies upon your poem a dead, cumbrous mass unless there is adequate heat and solvent, emotional power. Herein I think Wordsworth's "Excursion" fails as a poem. It has too much solid matter. It is an over-freighted bark that does not ride the waves buoyantly and lifelike; far less so than Tennyson's "In Memoriam," which is just as truly a philosophical poem as the "Excursion."

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(Wordsworth is the fresher poet; his poems seem really to have been written in the open air, and to have been brought directly under the oxygenating influence of outdoor nature; while in Tennyson this influence seems tempered or farther removed.)

The physical cosmos itself is not a thought, but an act. Natural objects do not affect us like well-wrought specimens or finished handicraft, which have nothing to follow, but as living, procreating energy. Nature is perpetual transition. Everything passes and presses on; there is no pause, no completion, no explanation. To produce and multiply endlessly, without ever reaching the last possibility of excellence, and without committing herself to any end, is the law of Nature.

These considerations bring us very near the essential difference between prose and poetry, or rather between the poetic and the didactic treatment of a subject. The essence of creative art is always the same; namely, interior movement and fusion; while the method of the didactic or prosaic treatment is fixity, limitation. The latter must formulate and define; but the principle of the former is to flow, to suffuse, to mount, to escape. We can conceive of life only as something constantly *becoming*. It plays forever on the verge. It is never *in loco*, but always *in transitu*. Arrest the wind, and it is no longer the wind; close your hands upon the light, and behold, it is gone.

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The antithesis of art in method is science, as Coleridge has intimated. As the latter aims at the particular, so the former aims at the universal. One would have truth of detail, the other truth of *ensemble*. The method of science may be symbolized by the straight line, that of art by the curve. The results of science, relatively to its aim, must be parts and pieces; while art must give the whole in every act; not quantitatively of course, but qualitatively, — by the integrity of the spirit in which it works.

The Greek mind will always be the type of the artist mind, mainly because of its practical bent, its healthful objectivity. The Greek never looked inward, but outward. Criticism and speculation were foreign to him. His head shows a very marked predominance of the motive and perceptive powers over the reflective. The expression of the face is never what we call intellectual or thoughtful, but commanding. His gods are not philosophers, but delight in deeds, justice, rulership.

Among the differences between the modern and the classical æsthetic mind is the greater precision and definiteness of the latter. The modern genius is Gothic, and demands in art a certain vagueness and spirituality like that of music, refusing to be grasped and formulated. Hence for us (and this is undoubtedly an improvement) there must always be something about a poem, or any work of art, besides

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the evident intellect or plot of it, or what is on its surface, or what it tells. This something is the Invisible, the Undefined, almost Unexpressed, and is perhaps the best part of any work of art, as it is of a noble personality. To amuse, to exhibit culture, to formulate the æsthetic, or even to excite the emotions, is by no means all, — is not even the deepest part. Beside these, and inclosing all, is the general impalpable effect, like good air, or the subtle presence of good spirits, wordless but more potent far than words. As, in the superb person, it is not merely what he says or knows or shows, or even how he behaves, but the silent qualities, like gravitation, that insensibly but resistlessly hold us; so in a good poem, or in any other expression of art.

IX

EMERSON

I

WHEREIN the race has so far lost and gained, in being transplanted from Europe to the New England soil and climate, is well illustrated by the writings of Emerson. There is greater refinement and sublimation of thought, greater clearness and sharpness of outline, greater audacity of statement, but, on the other hand, there is a loss of bulk, of unction, of adipose tissue, and shall we say of power?

Emerson is undoubtedly a master on the New England scale, — *such* a master as the land and race are capable of producing. He stands out clear and undeniable. The national type, as illustrated by that section of the country, is the purest and strongest in him of any yet. He can never suffer eclipse. Compared with the English or German master, he is undoubtedly deficient in viscera, in moral and intellectual stomach; but, on the other hand, he is of a fibre and quality hard to match in any age or land. From first to last he strikes one as something

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extremely pure and compact, like a nut or an egg. Great matters and tendencies lie folded in him, or rather are summarized in his pages. He writes short but pregnant chapters on great themes, as in his "English Traits," a book like rich preserves put up pound for pound, a pound of Emerson to every pound of John Bull. His chapter on Swedenborg in "Representative Men" is a good sample of his power to abbreviate and restate with added force. His mind acts like a sun-lens in gathering the cold pale beams of that luminary to a focus which warms and stimulates the reader in a surprising manner. The gist of the whole matter is here; and how much weariness and dullness and plodding is left out!

In fact, Emerson is an essence, a condensation; more so, perhaps, than any other man who has appeared in literature. Nowhere else is there such a preponderance of pure statement, of the very attar of thought, over the bulkier, circumstantial, qualifying, or secondary elements. He gives us net results. He is like those strong artificial fertilizers. A pinch of him is equivalent to a page or two of Johnson, and he is pitched many degrees higher as an essayist than even Bacon. He has had an immediate stimulating effect upon all the best minds of the country; how deep or lasting this influence will be remains to be seen.

This point and brevity has its convenience and

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value especially in certain fields of literature. I by no means would wish to water Emerson; yet it will not do to lose sight of the fact that mass and inertia are indispensable to the creator. Considering him as poet alone, I have no doubt of his irremediable deficiency here. You cannot have broad, massive effect, deep light and shade, or a torrent of power, with such extreme refinement and condensation. The superphosphates cannot take the place of the coarser, bulkier fertilizers. Especially in poetry do we require pure thought to be well diluted with the human, emotional qualities. In the writing most precious to the race, how little is definition and intellectual formula, and how much is impulse, emotion, will, character, blood, chyle! We must have liquids and gases and solvents. We perhaps get more of them in Carlyle. Emerson's page has more serene astral beauty than Carlyle's, but not that intense blast-furnace heat that melts down the most obdurate facts and characters into something plastic and poetical. Emerson's ideal is always the scholar, the man of books and ready wit; Carlyle's hero is a riding or striding ruler, or a master worker in some active field.

The antique mind no doubt affords the true type of health and wholeness in this respect. The Greek could see, and feel, and paint, and carve, and speak nothing but emotional man. In nature he saw nothing but personality, — nothing but human or

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superhuman qualities ; to him the elements all took the human shape. Of that vague, spiritual, abstract something which we call Nature he had no conception. He had no sentiment, properly speaking, but impulse and will-power. And the master minds of the world, in proportion to their strength, their spinal strength, have approximated to this type. Dante, Angelo, Shakespeare, Byron, Goethe, saw mainly man, and him not abstractly but concretely. And this is the charm of Burns and the glory of Scott. Carlyle has written the best histories and biographies of modern times, because he sees man with such fierce and steadfast eyes. Emerson sees him also, but he is not interested in him as a man, but mainly as a spirit, as a demigod, or as a wit or a philosopher.

Emerson's quality has changed a good deal in his later writings. His corn is no longer in the milk; it has grown hard, and we that read have grown hard, too. He has now ceased to be an expansive, revolutionary force, but he has not ceased to be a writer of extraordinary gripe and unexpected resources of statement. His startling piece of advice, "Hitch your wagon to a star," is typical of the man, as combining the most unlike and widely separate qualities. Because not less marked than his idealism and mysticism is his shrewd common sense, his practical bent, his definiteness, — in fact, the sharp New England mould in which he is cast. He is the

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master Yankee, the centennial flower of that thrifty and peculiar stock. More especially in his later writings and speakings do we see the native New England traits, — the alertness, eagerness, inquisitiveness, thrift, dryness, archness, caution, the nervous energy as distinguished from the old English unction and vascular force. How he husbands himself, — what prudence, what economy, always spending up, as he says, and not down! How alert, how attentive; what an inquisitor; always ready with some test question, with some fact or idea to match or to verify, ever on the lookout for some choice bit of adventure or information, or some anecdote that has pith and point! No tyro basks and takes his ease in his presence, but is instantly put on trial and must answer or be disgraced. He strikes at an idea like a falcon at a bird. His great fear seems to be lest there be some fact or point worth knowing that will escape him. He is a close-browed miser of the scholar's gains. He turns all values into intellectual coin. Every book or person or experience is an investment that will or will not warrant a good return in ideas. He goes to the Radical Club, or to the literary gathering, and listens with the closest attention to every word that is said, in hope that something will be said, some word dropped, that has the ring of the true metal. Apparently he does not permit himself a moment's indifference or inattention. His own pride is always to have

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the ready change, to speak the exact and proper word, to give to every occasion the dignity of wise speech. You are bartered with for your best. There is no profit in life but in the interchange of ideas, and the chief success is to have a head well filled with them. Hard cash at that ; no paper promises satisfy him ; he loves the clink and glint of the real coin.

His earlier writings were more flowing and suggestive, and had reference to larger problems ; but now everything has got weighed and stamped and converted into the medium of wise and scholarly conversation. It is of great value ; these later essays are so many bags of genuine coin, which it has taken a lifetime to hoard ; not all gold, but all good, and the fruit of wise industry and economy.

I know of no other writing that yields the reader so many strongly stamped medallion-like sayings and distinctions. There is a perpetual refining and recoinng of the current wisdom of life and conversation. It is the old gold or silver or copper, but how bright and new it looks in his pages ! Emerson loves facts, things, objects, as the workman his tools. He makes everything serve. The stress of expression is so great that he bends the most obdurate element to his purpose ; as the bird, under her keen necessity, weaves the most contrary and diverse materials into her nest. He seems to like best material that

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is a little refractory; it makes his page more piquant and stimulating. Within certain limits he loves roughness, but not at the expense of harmony. He has wonderful hardiness and push. Where else in literature is there a mind, moving in so rare a medium, that gives one such a sense of tangible resistance and force? It is a principle in mechanics that velocity is twice as great as mass: double your speed and you double your heat, though you halve your weight. In like manner this body we are considering is not the largest, but its speed is great, and the intensity of its impact with objects and experience is almost without parallel. Everything about a man like Emerson is important. I find his phrenology and physiognomy more than ordinarily typical and suggestive. Look at his picture there, — large, strong features on a small face and head, — no blank spaces; all given up to expression; a high predaceous nose, a sinewy brow, a massive, benevolent chin. In most men there is more face than feature, but here is a vast deal more feature than face, and a corresponding alertness and emphasis of character. Indeed, the man is made after this fashion. He is all type; his expression is transcendent. His mind has the hand's pronounced anatomy, — its cords and sinews and multiform articulations and processes, its opposing and coördinating power. If his brain is small, its texture is fine and its convolutions are deep. There have been broader and more

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catholic natures, but few so towering and audacious in expression and so rich in characteristic traits. Every scrap and shred of him is important and related. Like the strongly aromatic herbs and simples, — sage, mint, wintergreen, sassafras, — the least part carries the flavor of the whole. Is there one indifferent or equivocal or unsympathizing drop of blood in him? Where he is at all, he is entirely, — nothing extemporaneous; his most casual word seems to have lain in pickle a long time, and is saturated through and through with the Emersonian brine. Indeed, so pungent and penetrating is his quality that even his quotations seem more than half his own.

He is a man who occupies every inch of his rightful territory; he is there in proper person to the farthest bound. Not every man is himself and his best self at all times and to his finger points. Many great characters, perhaps the greatest, have more or less neutral or waste ground. You must penetrate a distance before you reach the real quick. Or there is a good wide margin of the commonplace which is sure to put them on good terms with the mass of their fellow-citizens. And one would think Emerson could afford to relax a little; that he had earned the right to a dull page or two now and then. The second best or third best word sometimes would make us appreciate his first best all the more. Even his god-father Plato nods occasionally, but Emer-

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son's good breeding will not for a moment permit such a slight to the reader.

Emerson's peculiar quality is very subtle, but very sharp and firm and unmistakable. It is not analogous to the commoner, slower-going elements, as heat, air, fire, water, but is nearer akin to that elusive but potent something we call electricity. It is abrupt, freaky, unexpected, and always communicates a little wholesome shock. It darts this way and that, and connects the far and the near in every line. There is always a leaping thread of light, and there is always a kind of answering peal or percussion. With what quickness and suddenness extremes are brought together! The reader is never prepared for what is to come next; the spark will most likely leap from some source or fact least thought of. His page seldom glows and burns, but there is a never-ceasing crackling and discharge of moral and intellectual force into the mind.

His chief weapon, and one that he never lays down, is identical with that of the great wits, namely, surprise. The point of his remark or idea is always sprung upon the reader, never quietly laid before him. He has a mortal dread of tameness and flatness, and would make the very water we drink bite the tongue.

He has been from the first a speaker and lecturer, and his style has been largely modeled according to the demand of those sharp, heady New England

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audiences for ceaseless intellectual friction and chafing. Hence every sentence is braided hard, and more or less knotted, and, though of silk, makes the mind tingle. He startles by overstatement, by understatement, by paradox, by antithesis, and by synthesis. Into every sentence enters the unexpected, — the congruous leaping from the incongruous, the high coming down, the low springing up, likeness or relation suddenly coming into view where before was only difference or antagonism. How he delights to bring the reader up with a short turn, to impale him on a knotty point, to explode one of his verbal bombshells under his very nose! Yet there is no trickery or rhetorical legerdemain. His heroic fibre always saves him.

The language in which Taine describes Bacon applies with even more force to Emerson: —

“Bacon,” he says, “is a producer of conceptions and of sentences. The matter being explored, he says to us: ‘Such it is; touch it not on that side; it must be approached from the other.’ Nothing more; no proof, no effort to convince; he affirms, and nothing more; he has thought in the manner of artists and poets, and he speaks after the manner of prophets and seers. ‘Cogita et visa,’ — this title of one of his books might be the title of all. His process is that of the creators; it is intuition, not reasoning. . . . There is nothing more hazardous, more like fantasy, than this mode of thought when

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it is not checked by natural and good strong common sense. This common sense, which is a kind of natural divination, the stable equilibrium of an intellect always gravitating to the true, like the needle to the north pole, Bacon possesses in the highest degree. He has a preëminently practical, even an utilitarian mind."

It is significant, and is indeed the hidden seed or root out of which comes the explanation of much, if not the main part, of his life and writings, that Emerson comes of a long line of clergymen; that the blood in his veins has been teaching, and preaching, and thinking, and growing austere, these many generations. One wonders that it is still so bounding and strong, so red with iron and quick with oxygen. But in him seems to be illustrated one of those rare cases in the genealogy of families where the best is carried forward each time, and steadily recruited and intensified. It does not seem possible for any man to become just what Emerson is from the stump, though perhaps great men have been the fruit of one generation; but there is a quality in him, an aroma of fine manners, a propriety, a chivalry in the blood, that dates back, and has been refined and transmitted many times. Power is born with a man, and is always first hand, but culture, genius, noble instincts, gentle manners, or the easy capacity for these things, may be, and to a greater or a lesser extent are, the contribution of the past. Emerson's

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culture is radical and ante-natal, and never fails him. The virtues of all those New England ministers and all those tomes of sermons are in this casket. One fears sometimes that he has been too much clarified, or that there is not enough savage grace or original viciousness and grit in him to save him. How he hates the roysterers, and all the rank, turbulent, human passions, and is chilled by the thought that perhaps after all Shakespeare led a vulgar life!

When Tyndall was here, he showed us how the dark, coarse, invisible heat rays could be strained out of the spectrum ; or, in other words, that every solar beam was weighted with a vast, nether, invisible side, which made it a lever of tremendous power in organic nature. After some such analogy, one sees how the highest order of power in the intellectual world draws upon and is nourished by those rude, primitive, barbaric human qualities that our culture and pietism tend to cut off and strain out. Our culture has its eye on the other end of the spectrum, where the fine violet and indigo rays are ; but all the lifting, rounding, fructifying powers of the system are in the coarse, dark rays — the black devil — at the base. The angel of light is yoked with the demon of darkness, and the pair create and sustain the world.

In rare souls like Emerson, the fruit of extreme culture, it is inevitable that at least some of the

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heat rays should be lost, and we miss them especially when we contrast him with the elder masters. The elder masters did not seem to get rid of the coarse or vulgar in human life, but royally accepted it, and struck their roots into it, and drew from it sustenance and power : but there is an ever-present suspicion that Emerson prefers the saints to the sinners ; prefers the prophets and seers to Homer, Shakespeare, and Dante. Indeed, it is to be distinctly stated and emphasized, that Emerson is essentially a priest, and that the key to all he has said and written is to be found in the fact that his point of view is not that of the acceptor, the creator, — Shakespeare's point of view, — but that of the refiner and selector, the priest's point of view. He described his own state rather than that of mankind when he said, "The human mind stands ever in perplexity, demanding intellect, demanding sanctity, impatient equally of each without the other."

Much surprise has been expressed in literary circles in this country that Emerson has not followed up his first off-hand indorsement of Walt Whitman with fuller and more deliberate approval of that poet, but has rather taken the opposite tack. But the wonder is that he should have been carried off his feet at all in the manner he was ; and it must have been no ordinary breeze that did it. Emerson shares with his contemporaries the vast preponderance of the critical and discerning intellect over

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the fervid, manly qualities and faith. His power of statement is enormous ; his scope of being is not enormous. The prayer he uttered many years ago for a poet of the modern, one who could see in the gigantic materialism of the times the carnival of the same deities we so much admire in Greece and Rome, seems to many to have even been explicitly answered in Whitman; but Emerson is balked by the cloud of materials, the din and dust of action, and the moving armies, in which the god comes enveloped.

But Emerson has his difficulties with all the poets. Homer is too literal, Milton too literary, and there is too much of the whooping savage in Whitman. He seems to think the real poet is yet to appear; a poet on new terms, the reconciler, the poet-priest, — one who shall unite the whiteness and purity of the saint with the power and unction of the sinner; one who shall bridge the chasm between Shakespeare and St. John. For when our Emerson gets on his highest horse, which he does only on two or three occasions, he finds Shakespeare only a half man, and that it would take Plato and Manu and Moses and Jesus to complete him. Shakespeare, he says, rested with the symbol, with the festal beauty of the world, and did not take the final step, and explore the essence of things, and ask, "Whence? What? and Whither?" He was not wise for himself; he did not lead a beautiful, saintly life, but

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ate and drank, and reveled, and affiliated with all manner of persons, and quaffed the cup of life with gusto and relish. The elect, spotless souls will always look upon the heat and unconscious optimism of the great poet with deep regret. But if man would not become emasculated, if human life is to continue, we must cherish the coarse as well as the fine, the root as well as the top and flower. The poet-priest in the Emersonian sense has never yet appeared, and what reason have we to expect him? The poet means life, the whole of life, — all your ethics and philosophies, and essences and reason of things, in vital play and fusion, clothed with form and color, and throbbing with passion: the priest means a part, a thought, a precept; he means suppression, expurgation, death. To have gone farther than Shakespeare would have been to cease to be a poet, and to become a mystic or a seer.

Yet it would be absurd to say, as a leading British literary journal recently did, that Emerson is not a poet. He is one kind of a poet. He has written plenty of poems that are as melodious as the hum of a wild bee in the air, — chords of wild æolian music.

Undoubtedly his is, on the whole, a bloodless kind of poetry. It suggests the pale gray matter of the cerebrum rather than flesh and blood. Mr. William Rossetti has made a suggestive remark about him. He is not so essentially a poet, says this critic, as he is a Druid that wanders among the

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bards, and strikes the harp with even more than bardic stress.

Not in the poetry of any of his contemporaries is there such a burden of the mystery of things, nor are there such round wind-harp tones, nor lines so tense and resonant, and blown upon by a breeze from the highest heaven of thought. In certain respects he has gone beyond any other. He has gone beyond the symbol to the thing signified. He has emptied poetic forms of their meaning and made poetry of that. He would fain cut the world up into stars to shine in the intellectual firmament. He is more and he is less than the best.

He stands among other poets like a pine-tree amid a forest of oak and maple. He seems to belong to another race, and to other climes and conditions. He is great in one direction, up; no dancing leaves, but rapt needles; never abandonment, never a tossing and careering, never an avalanche of emotion; the same in sun and snow, scattering his cones, and with night and obscurity amid his branches. He is moral first and last, and it is through his impassioned and poetic treatment of the moral law that he gains such an ascendancy over his reader. He says, as for other things he makes poetry of them, but the moral law makes poetry of him. He sees in the world only the ethical, but he sees it through the æsthetic faculty. Hence his page has the double charm of the beautiful and the good.

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II

One of the penalties Emerson pays for his sharp decision, his mental pertinence and resistance, is the curtailment of his field of vision and enjoyment. He is one of those men whom the gods drive with blinders on, so that they see fiercely in only a few directions. Supreme lover as he is of poetry, — Herrick's poetry, — yet from the whole domain of what may be called emotional poetry, the poetry of fluid humanity, tallied by music, he seems to be shut out. This may be seen by his reference to Shelley in his last book, "Letters and Social Aims," and by his preference of the metaphysical poet throughout his writings. Wordsworth's famous "Ode" is, he says, the high-water mark of English literature. What he seems to value most in Shakespeare is the marvelous wit, the pregnant sayings. He finds no poet in France, and in his "English Traits" credits Tennyson with little but melody and color. (In our last readings, do we not surely come to feel the manly and robust fibre beneath Tennyson's silken vestments?) He demands of poetry that it be a kind of spiritual manna, and is at last forced to confess that there are no poets, and that when such angels do appear, Homer and Milton will be tin pans.

One feels that this will not do, and that health, and wholeness, and the well-being of man are more

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in the keeping of Shakespeare than in the hands of Zoroaster or any of the saints. I doubt if that rarefied air will make good red blood and plenty of it.

But Emerson makes his point plain, and is not indebted to any of his teachers for it. It is the burden of all he writes upon the subject. The long discourse that opens his last volume¹ has numerous sub-headings, as "Poetry," "Imagination," "Creation," "Morals," and "Transcendency;" but it is all a plea for transcendency. I am reminded of the story of an old Indian chief who was invited to some great dinner where the first course was "succotash." When the second course was ready the old Indian said he would have a little more succotash, and when the third was ready he called for more succotash, and so with the fourth and fifth, and on to the end. In like manner Emerson will have nothing but the "spiritual law" in poetry, and he has an enormous appetite for that. Let him have it, but why should he be so sure that mankind all want succotash? Mankind finally comes to care little for what any poet has to *say*, but only for what he has to *sing*. We want the pearl of thought dissolved in the wine of life. How much better are sound bones and a good digestion in poetry than all the philosophy and transcendentalism in the world!

What one comes at last to want is power, mastery; and, whether it be mastery over the subtleties

¹ *Letters and Social Aims.*

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of the intellect, as in Emerson himself, or over the passions and the springs of action, as in Shakespeare, or over our terrors and the awful hobgoblins of hell and Satan, as in Dante, or over vast masses and spaces of nature and the abysses of aboriginal man, as in Walt Whitman, what matters it? Are we not refreshed by all? There is one mastery in Burns, another in Byron, another in Rabelais, and in Victor Hugo, and in Tennyson; and though the critic has his preferences, though he affect one more than another, yet who shall say this one is a poet and that one is not? "There may be any number of supremes," says the master, and "one by no means contravenes another." Every gas is a vacuum to every other gas, says Emerson, quoting the scientist; and every great poet complements and leaves the world free to every other great poet.

Emerson's limitation or fixity is seen also in the fact that he has taken no new step in his own direction, if indeed another step could be taken in that direction and not step off. He is a prisoner on his peak. He cannot get away from the old themes. His later essays are upon essentially the same subjects as his first. He began by writing on nature, greatness, manners, art, poetry, and he is still writing on them. He is a husbandman who practices no rotation of crops, but submits to the exhaustive process of taking about the same things from his soil year after year. Some readers think they detect

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a falling off. It is evident there is not the same spontaneity, and that the soil has to be more and more stirred and encouraged, which is not at all to be wondered at.

But if Emerson has not advanced, he has not receded, at least in conviction and will, which is always the great danger with our bold prophets. The world in which he lives, the themes upon which he writes, never become hackneyed to him. They are always fresh and new. He has hardened, but time has not abated one jot or tittle his courage and hope, — no cynicism and no relaxing of his hold, no decay of his faith, while the nobleness of his tone, the chivalry of his utterance, is even more marked than at first. Better a hundred-fold than his praise of fine manners is the delicacy and courtesy and the grace of generous breeding displayed on every page. Why does one grow impatient and vicious when Emerson writes of fine manners and the punctilios of conventional life, and feel like kicking into the street every divinity enshrined in the drawing-room? It is a kind of insult to a man to speak the word in his presence. Purify the parlors indeed by keeping out the Choctaws, the laughers! Let us go and hold high carnival for a week, and split the ears of the groundlings with our “contemptible squeals of joy.” And when he makes a dead set at praising eloquence, I find myself instantly on the side of the old clergyman he tells of who prayed that he might never be

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eloquent; or when he makes the test of a man an intellectual one, as his skill at repartee, and praises the literary crack shot, and defines manliness to be readiness, as he does in this last volume and in the preceding one, I am filled with a perverse envy of all the confused and stammering heroes of history. Is Washington faltering out a few broken and ungrammatical sentences, in reply to the vote of thanks of the Virginia legislature, less manly than the glib tongue in the court-room or in the club that can hit the mark every time? The test of a wit or of a scholar is one thing; the test of a man, I take it, is quite another. In this and some other respects Emerson is well antidoted by Carlyle, who lays the stress on the opposite qualities, and charges his hero to hold his tongue. But one cheerfully forgives Emerson the way he puts his thumb-nail on the bores. He speaks feelingly, and no doubt from as deep an experience as any man in America.

I really hold Emerson in such high esteem that I think I can safely indulge myself in a little more fault-finding with him.

I think it must be admitted that he is deficient in sympathy. This accounts in a measure for his coolness, his self-possession, and that kind of uncompromising rectitude or inflexibleness that marks his career, and that he so lauds in his essays. No man is so little liable to be warped or compromised in any way as the unsympathetic man. Emerson's

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ideal is the man who stands firm, who is unmoved, who never laughs; or apologizes, or deprecates, or makes concessions, or assents through good-nature, or goes abroad; who is not afraid of giving offense; "who answers you without supplication in his eye," — in fact, who stands like a granite pillar amid the slough of life. You may wrestle with this man, he says, or swim with him, or lodge in the same chamber with him, or eat at the same table, and yet he is a thousand miles off, and can at any moment finish with you. He is a sheer precipice, is this man, and not to be trifled with. You shrinking, quivering, acquiescing natures, avaunt! You sensitive plants, you hesitating, indefinite creatures, you uncertain around the edges, you non-resisting, and you heroes, whose courage is quick, but whose wit is tardy, make way, and let the human crustacean pass. Emerson is moulded upon this pattern. It is no mush and milk that you get at this table. "A great man is coming to dine with me; I do not wish to please him; I wish that he should wish to please me." On the lecture stand he might be of wood, so far as he is responsive to the moods and feelings of his auditors. They must come to him; he will not go to them: but they do not always come. Latterly the people have felt insulted, the lecturer showed them so little respect. Then, before a promiscuous gathering, and in stirring and eventful times like ours, what anachronisms most of his lectures

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are, even if we take the high ground that they are pearls before swine! The swine may safely demand some apology of him who offers them pearls instead of corn.

Emerson's fibre is too fine for large public uses. He is what he is, and is to be accepted as such, only let us *know* what he is. He does not speak to universal conditions, or to human nature in its broadest, deepest, strongest phases. His thought is far above the great sea level of humanity, where stand most of the world's masters. He is like one of those marvelously clear mountain lakes whose water-line runs above all the salt seas of the globe. He is very precious, taken at his real worth. Why find fault with the isolation and the remoteness in view of the sky-like purity and depth?

Still I must go on sounding and exploring him, reporting where I touch bottom and where I do not. He reaps great advantage from his want of sympathy. The world makes no inroads upon him through this channel. He is not distracted by the throng or maybe the mob of emotions that find entrance here. He shines like a star undimmed by current events. He speaks as from out the interstellar spaces. 'T is vulgar sympathy makes mortals of us all, and I think Emerson's poetry finally lacks just that human coloring and tone, that flesh tint of the heart, which vulgar sympathy with human life as such imparts.

But after we have made all possible deductions

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from Emerson, there remains the fact that he is a living force, and, tried by home standards, a master. Wherein does the secret of his power lie? He is the prophet and philosopher of young men. The old man and the man of the world make little of him, but of the youth who is ripe for him he takes almost an unfair advantage. One secret of his charm I take to be the instant success with which he transfers our interest in the romantic, the chivalrous, the heroic, to the sphere of morals and the intellect. We are let into another realm unlooked for, where daring and imagination also lead. The secret and suppressed heart finds a champion. To the young man fed upon the penny precepts and staple Johnsonianism of English literature, and upon what is generally doled out in the schools and colleges, it is a surprise; it is a revelation. A new world opens before him. The nebulae of his spirit are resolved or shown to be irresolvable. The fixed stars of his inner firmament are brought immeasurably near. He drops all other books. He will gaze and wonder. From Locke or Johnson or Wayland to Emerson is like a change from the school history to the Arabian Nights. There may be extravagances and some jugglery, but for all that the lesson is a genuine one, and to us of this generation immense.

Emerson is the knight-errant of the moral sentiment. He leads, in our time and country, one illustrious division, at least, in the holy crusade of the

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affections and the intuitions against the usurpations of tradition and theological dogma. He marks the flower, the culmination, under American conditions and in the finer air of the New World, of the reaction begun by the German philosophers, and passed along by later French and English thinkers, of man against circumstance, of spirit against form, of the present against the past. What splendid affirmation, what inspiring audacity, what glorious egoism, what generous brag, what sacred impiety! There is an *éclat* about his words, and a brave challenging of immense odds, that is like an army with banners. It stirs the blood like a bugle-call : beauty, bravery, and a sacred cause, — the three things that win with us always. The first essay is a forlorn hope. See what the chances are : “The world exists for the education of each man. . . . He should see that he can live all history in his own person. He must sit solidly at home, and not suffer himself to be bullied by kings or empires, but know that he is greater than all the geography and all the government of the world; he must transfer the point of view from which history is commonly read from Rome and Athens and London to himself, and not deny his conviction that he is the court, and, if England or Egypt have anything to say to him, he will try the case; if not, let them forever be silent.” In every essay that follows, there are the same great odds and the same electric call to the youth to face them. **It**

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is, indeed, as much a world of fable and romance that Emerson introduces us to as we get in Homer or Herodotus. It is true, all true, — true as Arthur and his knights, or Pilgrim's Progress, and I pity the man who has not tasted its intoxication, or who can see nothing in it.

The intuitions are the bright band, without armor or shield, that slay the mailed and bucklered giants of the understanding. Government, institutions, religions, fall before the glance of the hero's eye. Art and literature, Shakespeare, Angelo, Æschylus, are humble suppliants before you, the king. The commonest fact is idealized, and the whole relation of man to the universe is thrown into a kind of gigantic perspective. It is not much to say there is exaggeration: the very start makes Mohammed's attitude toward the mountain tame. The mountain *shall* come to Mohammed, and, in the eyes of all born readers of Emerson, the mountain does come, and comes with alacrity.

Some shrewd judges apprehend that Emerson is not going to last; basing their opinion upon the fact, already alluded to, that we outgrow him, or pass through him as through an experience that we cannot repeat. He is but a bridge to other things; he gets you over. He is an exceptional fact in literature, say they, and does not represent lasting or universal conditions. He is too fine for the rough wear and tear of ages. True, we do not outgrow Dante,

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or Cervantes, or Bacon ; and I doubt if the Anglo-Saxon stock at least ever outgrows that king of romancers, Walter Scott. These men and their like appeal to a larger audience, and in some respects a more adult one, at least one more likely to be found in every age and people. Their achievement was more from the common level of human nature than are Emerson's astonishing paradoxes. Yet I believe his work has the seal of immortality upon it as much as that of any of them. No doubt he has a meaning to us now and in this country that will be lost to succeeding time. His religious significance will not be so important to the next generation. He is being or has been so completely absorbed by his times, that readers and hearers hereafter will get him from a thousand sources, or his contribution will become the common property of the race. All the masters probably had some peculiar import or tie to their contemporaries that we at a distance miss. It is thought by scholars that we have lost the key, or one key, to Dante, and Chaucer, and Shakespeare, — the key or the insight that people living under the same roof get of each other.

But, aside from and over and above everything else, Emerson *appeals to youth and to genius*. If you have these, you will understand him and delight in him; if not, or neither of them, you will make little of him. And I do not see why this should not be just as true any time hence as at present.

X

THE FLIGHT OF THE EAGLE

TO WALT WHITMAN

*"I, thirty-six years old, in perfect health, begin,
Hoping to cease not till death."*

CHANTS DEMOCRATIC.

“They say that thou art sick, art growing old,
Thou Poet of unconquerable health,
With youth far-stretching, through the golden wealth
Of autumn, to Death's frostful, friendly cold.
The never-blenching eyes, that did behold
Life's fair and foul, with measureless content,
And gaze ne'er sated, saddened as they bent
Over the dying soldier in the fold
Of thy large comrade love ; — then broke the tear !
War-dream, field-vigil, the bequeathed kiss,
Have brought old age to thee ; yet, Master, now,
Cease not thy song to us ; lest we should miss
A death-chant of indomitable cheer,
Blown as a gale from God ; — oh sing it thou !”

ARRAN LEIGH (England).

I

WHETHER has witnessed the flight of any of
the great birds, as the eagle, the condor, the
sea-gulls, the proud hawks, has perhaps felt that
the poetic suggestion of the feathered tribes is not

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all confined to the sweet and tiny songsters, — the thrushes, canaries, and mockingbirds of the groves and orchards, or of the gilded cage in my lady's chamber. It is by some such analogy that I would indicate the character of the poetry I am about to discuss, compared with that of the more popular and melodious singer, — the poetry of the strong wing and the daring flight.

Well and profoundly has a Danish critic said, in "For Ide og Virkelighed" ("For the Idea and the Reality"), a Copenhagen magazine: —

"It may be candidly admitted that the American poet has not the elegance, special melody, nor *recherché* aroma of the accepted poets of Europe or his own country; but his compass and general harmony are infinitely greater. The sweetness and spice, the poetic *ennui*, the tender longings, the exquisite art-finish of those choice poets are mainly unseen and unmet in him, — perhaps because he cannot achieve them, more likely because he disdains them. But there is an electric *living soul* in his poetry, far more fermenting and bracing. His wings do not glitter in their movement from rich and varicolored plumage, nor are his notes those of the accustomed song-birds; but his flight is the flight of the eagle."

Yes, there is not only the delighting of the ear with the outpouring of sweetest melody and its lessons, but there is the delighting of the eye and soul

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through that soaring and circling in the vast empyrean of "a strong bird on pinions free," — lessons of freedom, power, grace, and spiritual suggestion, — vast, unparalleled, *formless* lessons.

It is now upwards of twenty years since Walt Whitman printed (in 1855) his first thin beginning volume of "Leaves of Grass;" and, holding him to the test which he himself early proclaimed, namely, "that the proof of the poet shall be sternly deferred till his country has absorb'd him as affectionately as he has absorb'd it," he is yet on trial, yet makes his appeal to an indifferent or to a scornful audience. That his complete absorption, however, by his own country and by the world, is ultimately to take place, is one of the beliefs that grows stronger and stronger within me as time passes, and I suppose it is with a hope to help forward this absorption that I write of him now. Only here and there has he yet effected a lodgment, usually in the younger and more virile minds. But considering the unparalleled audacity of his undertaking, and the absence in most critics and readers of anything like full-grown and robust æsthetic perception, the wonder really is not that he should have made such slow progress, but that he should have gained any foothold at all. The whole literary *technique* of the race for the last two hundred years has been squarely against him, laying, as it does, the emphasis upon form and scholarly

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endowments instead of upon aboriginal power and manhood.

My own mastery of the poet, incomplete as it is, has doubtless been much facilitated by contact — talks, meals, and jaunts — with him, stretching through a decade of years, and by seeing how everything in his *personnel* was resumed and carried forward in his literary expression; in fact, how the one was a living commentary upon the other. After the test of time, nothing goes home like the test of actual intimacy; and to tell me that Whitman is not a large, fine, fresh, magnetic personality, making you love him and want always to be with him, were to tell me that my whole past life is a deception, and all the impression of my perceptive faculties a fraud. I have studied him as I have studied the birds, and have found that the nearer I got to him the more I saw. Nothing about a first-class man can be overlooked; he is to be studied in every feature, — in his physiology and phrenology, in the shape of his head, in his brow, his eye, his glance, his nose, his ear (the ear is as indicative in a man as in a horse), his voice. In Whitman all these things are remarkably striking and suggestive. His face exhibits a rare combination of harmony and sweetness with strength, — strength like the vaults and piers of the Roman architecture. Sculptor never carved a finer ear or a more imaginative brow. Then his heavy-lidded, absorbing eye, his sympa-

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thetic voice, and the impression which he makes of starting from the broad bases of the universal human traits. (If Whitman was grand in his physical and perfect health, I think him far more so now (1877), cheerfully mastering paralysis, penury, and old age.) You know, on seeing the man and becoming familiar with his presence, that, if he achieve the height at all, it will be from where every man stands, and not from some special genius, or exceptional and adventitious point. He does not make the impression of the scholar or artist or *littérateur*, but such as you would imagine the antique heroes to make, — that of a sweet-blooded, receptive, perfectly normal, catholic man, with, further than that, a look about him that is best suggested by the word elemental or cosmical. It was this, doubtless, that led Thoreau to write, after an hour's interview, that he suggested "something a little more than human." In fact, the main clew to Walt Whitman's life and personality, and the expression of them in his poems, is to be found in about the largest emotional element that has appeared anywhere. This, if not controlled by a potent rational balance, would either have tossed him helplessly forever, or wrecked him as disastrously as ever storm and gale drove ship to ruin. These volcanic emotional fires appear everywhere in his books; and it is really these, aroused to intense activity and unnatural strain during the four years of the war and his persistent labors in the hospi-

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tals, that have resulted in his illness and paralysis since.

It has been impossible, I say, to resist these personal impressions and magnetisms, and impossible with me not to follow them up in the poems, in doing which I found that his "Leaves of Grass" was really *the drama of himself*, played upon various and successive stages of nature, history, passion, experience, patriotism, and that he had not made, nor had he intended to make, mere excellent "poems," tunes, statues, or statuettes, in the ordinary sense.

Before the man's complete acceptance and assimilation by America, he may have to be first passed down through the minds of critics and commentators, and given to the people with some of his rank new quality taken off, — a quality like that which adheres to objects in the open air, and makes them either forbidding or attractive, as one's mood is healthful and robust or feeble and languid. The processes are silently at work. Already seen from a distance, and from other atmospheres and surroundings, he assumes magnitude and orbic coherence; for in curious contrast to the general denial of Whitman in this country (though he has more lovers and admirers here than is generally believed) stands the reception accorded him in Europe. The poets there, almost without exception, recognize his transcendent quality, the men of science his thorough

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scientific basis, the republicans his inborn democracy, and all his towering picturesque personality and modernness. Professor Clifford says he is more thoroughly in harmony with the spirit and letter of advanced scientism than any other living poet. Professor Tyrrell and Mr. Symonds find him eminently Greek, in the sense in which to be natural and "self-regulated by the law of perfect health" is to be Greek. The French "*Revue des Deux Mondes*" pronounces his war poems the most vivid, the most humanly passionate, and the most modern, of all the verse of the nineteenth century. Freiligrath translated him into German, and hailed him as the founder of a new democratic and modern order of poetry, greater than the old. But I do not propose to go over the whole list here; I only wish to indicate that the absorption is well commenced abroad, and that probably her poet will at last reach America by way of those far-off, roundabout channels. The old mother will first masticate and moisten the food which is still too tough for her offspring.

When I first fell in with "*Leaves of Grass*," I was taken by isolated passages scattered here and there through the poems; these I seized upon, and gave myself no concern about the rest. Single lines in it often went to the bottom of the questions that were vexing me. The following, though less here than when encountered in the frame of mind which the poet begets in you, curiously settled and

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stratified a certain range of turbid, fluctuating inquiry: —

“There was never any more inception than there is
now, —

Nor any more youth or age than there is now;

And will never be any more perfection than there is
now,

Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.”

These lines, also, early had an attraction for me
I could not define, and were of great service: —

“Pleasantly and well-suited I walk,

Whither I walk I cannot define, but I know it is good,

The whole universe indicates that it is good,

The past and the present indicate that it is good.”

In the following episode, too, there was to me
something far deeper than the words or the story: —

“The runaway slave came to my house and stopt out-
side ;

I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the wood-pile;

Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him
limpsy and weak,

And went where he sat on a log, and led him in, and
assured him,

And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated body
and bruis'd feet,

And gave him a room that entered from my own, and
gave him some coarse clean clothes;

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And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his awkwardness,

And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and ankles:

He stayed with me a week before he was recuperated and pass'd North;

(I had him sit next me at table — my firelock lean'd in the corner.)”

But of the book as a whole I could form no adequate conception, and it was not for many years, and after I had known the poet himself, as already stated, that I saw in it a teeming, rushing globe well worthy my best days and strength to surround and comprehend.

One thing that early took me in the poems was (as before alluded to) the tremendous personal force back of them, and felt through them as the sun through vapor; not merely intellectual grasp or push, but a warm, breathing, towering, magnetic Presence that there was no escape from.

Another fact I was quick to perceive, namely, that this man had almost in excess a quality in which every current poet was lacking, — I mean the faculty of being in entire sympathy with actual nature, and the objects and shows of nature, and of rude, abysmal man; and appalling directness of utterance therefrom, at first hand, without any intermediate agency or modification.

The influence of books and works of art upon

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an author may be seen in all respectable writers. If knowledge alone made literature, or culture genius, there would be no dearth of these things among the moderns. But I feel bound to say that there is something higher and deeper than the influence or perusal of any or all books, or all other productions of genius, — a quality of information which the masters can never impart, and which all the libraries do not hold. This is the absorption by an author, previous to becoming so, of the spirit of nature, through the visible objects of the universe, and his affiliation with them subjectively and objectively. Not more surely is the blood quickened and purified by contact with the unbreathed air than is the spirit of man vitalized and made strong by intercourse with the real things of the earth. The calm, all-permitting, wordless spirit of nature, — yet so eloquent to him who hath ears to hear! The sunrise, the heaving sea, the woods and mountains, the storm and the whistling winds, the gentle summer day, the winter sights and sounds, the night and the high dome of stars, — to have really perused these, especially from childhood onward, till what there is in them, so impossible to define, finds its full mate and echo in the mind, — this only is the lore which breathes the breath of life into all the rest. Without it, literary productions may have the superb beauty of statues, but with it only can they have the beauty of life.

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I was never troubled at all by what the critics called Whitman's want of art, or his violation of art. I saw that he at once designedly swept away all which the said critics have commonly meant by that term. The dominant impression was of the living presence and voice. He would have no curtains, he said, not the finest, between himself and his reader; and in thus bringing me face to face with his subject I perceived he not only did not escape conventional art, but I perceived an enlarged, enfranchised art in this very abnegation of art. "When half-gods go, whole gods arrive." It was obvious to me that the new style gained more than it lost, and that in this fullest operatic launching forth of the voice, though it sounded strange at first, and required the ear to get used to it, there might be quite as much science, and a good deal more power, than in the tuneful but constricted measures we were accustomed to.

To the eye the page of the new poet presented about the same contrast with the page of the popular poets that trees and the free, unbidden growths of nature do with a carefully clipped hedge; and to the spirit the contrast was about the same. The hedge is the more studiedly and obviously beautiful, but, ah! there is a kind of beauty and satisfaction in trees that one would not care to lose. There are symmetry and proportion in the sonnet, but to me there is something I would not exchange for

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them in the wild swing and balance of many free and unrhymed passages in Shakespeare; like the one, for instance, in which these lines occur: —

“To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round
About the pendent world.”

Here is the spontaneous grace and symmetry of a forest tree, or a sougling mass of foliage.

And this passage from my poet I do not think could be improved by the verse-maker's art: —

“This day before dawn I ascended a hill and look'd at
the crowded heaven,
And I said to my Spirit, *When we become the enfolders of
those orbs and the pleasure and knowledge of every-
thing in them, shall we be fill'd and satisfied then?*
And my Spirit said, *No, we but level that lift, to pass and
continue beyond.*”

Such breaking with the routine poetic, and with the grammar of verse, was of course a dangerous experiment, and threw the composer absolutely upon his intrinsic merits, upon his innately poetic and rhythmic quality. He must stand or fall by these alone, since he discarded all artificial, all adventitious helps. If interior, spontaneous rhythm could not be relied on, and the natural music and flexibility of language, then there was nothing to shield the ear from the pitiless hail of words, — not one softly padded verse anywhere.

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All poets, except those of the very first order, owe immensely to the form, the art, the stereotyped metres, and stock figures they find ready to hand. The form is suggestive, — it invites and aids expression, and lends itself readily, like fashion, to conceal, or extenuate, or eke out poverty of thought and feeling in the verse. The poet can “cut and cover,” as the farmer says, in a way the prose-writer never can, nor one whose form is essentially prose, like Whitman’s.

I, too, love to see the forms worthily used, as they always are by the master; and I have no expectation that they are going out of fashion right away. A great deal of poetry that serves, and helps sweeten one’s cup, would be impossible without them, — would be nothing when separated from them. It is for the ear, and for the sense of tune and of carefully carved and modeled forms, and is not meant to arouse the soul with the taste of power, and to start off on journeys for itself. But the great inspired utterances, like the Bible, — what would they gain by being cast in the moulds of metrical verse?

In all that concerns art, viewed from any high standpoint, — proportion, continence, self-control, unfaltering adherence to natural standards, subordination of parts, perfect adjustment of the means to the end, obedience to inward law, no trifling, no levity, no straining after effect, impartially attending to the back and loins as well as to the head,

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and even holding toward his subject an attitude of perfect acceptance and equality, — principles of art to which alone the great spirits are amenable, — in all these respects, I say, this poet is as true as an orb in astronomy.

To his literary expression pitched on scales of such unprecedented breadth and loftiness, the contrast of his personal life comes in with a foil of curious homeliness and simplicity. Perhaps never before has the absolute and average *commonness of humanity* been so steadily and unaffectedly adhered to. I give here a glimpse of him in Washington on a Navy Yard horse-car, toward the close of the war, one summer day at sundown. The car is crowded and suffocatingly hot, with many passengers on the rear platform, and among them a bearded, florid-faced man, elderly but agile, resting against the dash, by the side of the young conductor, and evidently his intimate friend. The man wears a broad-brim white hat. Among the jam inside, near the door, a young Englishwoman, of the working class, with two children, has had trouble all the way with the youngest, a strong, fat, fretful, bright babe of fourteen or fifteen months, who bids fair to worry the mother completely out, besides becoming a howling nuisance to everybody. As the car tugs around Capitol Hill the young one is more demoniac than ever, and the flushed and perspiring mother is just ready to burst into tears with weariness and vexa-

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tion. The car stops at the top of the hill to let off most of the rear platform passengers, and the white-hatted man reaches inside, and, gently but firmly disengaging the babe from its stifling place in the mother's arms, takes it in his own, and out in the air. The astonished and excited child, partly in fear, partly in satisfaction at the change, stops its screaming, and, as the man adjusts it more securely to his breast, plants its chubby hands against him, and, pushing off as far as it can, gives a good long look squarely in his face, — then, as if satisfied, snuggles down with its head on his neck, and in less than a minute is sound and peacefully asleep without another whimper, utterly fagged out. A square or so more and the conductor, who has had an unusually hard and uninterrupted day's work, gets off for his first meal and relief since morning. And now the white-hatted man, holding the slumbering babe, also acts as conductor the rest of the distance, keeping his eye on the passengers inside, who have by this time thinned out greatly. He makes a very good conductor, too, pulling the bell to stop or to go on as needed, and seems to enjoy the occupation. The babe meanwhile rests its fat cheeks close on his neck and gray beard, one of his arms vigilantly surrounding it, while the other signals, from time to time, with the strap; and the flushed mother inside has a good half hour to breathe, and to cool and recover herself.

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II

No poem of our day dates and locates itself as absolutely as "Leaves of Grass;" but suppose it had been written three or four centuries ago, and had located itself in mediæval Europe, and was now first brought to light, together with a history of Walt Whitman's simple and disinterested life, can there be any doubt about the cackling that would at once break out in the whole brood of critics over the golden egg that had been uncovered? This I reckon would be a favorite passage with all: —

"You sea! I resign myself to you also — I guess what
you mean;

I behold from the beach your crooked inviting fingers;

I believe you refuse to go back without feeling of me;

We must have a turn together — I undress — hurry me
out of sight of the land;

Cushion me soft, rock me in billowy drowse;

Dash me with amorous wet — I can repay you.

"Sea of stretch'd ground-swells!

Sea breathing broad and convulsive breaths!

Sea of the brine of life! sea of unshovel'd yet always
ready graves!

Howler and scooper of storms! capricious and dainty
sea!

I am integral with you — I too am of one phase, and of
all phases."

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This other passage would afford many a text for the moralists and essayists: —

“Of persons arrived at high positions, ceremonies, wealth,
scholarship, and the like;
To me, all that those persons have arrived at sinks away
from them, except as it results to their Bodies and
Souls,
So that often, to me, they appear gaunt and naked,
And often, to me, each one mocks the others, and mocks
himself or herself,
And of each one, the core of life, namely happiness, is
full of the rotten excrement of maggots;
And often, to me, those men and women pass unwittingly
the true realities of life, and go toward false reali-
ties,
And often, to me, they are alive after what custom has
served them, but nothing more,
And often, to me, they are sad, hasty, unwaked somnam-
bules, walking the dusk.”

Ah, Time, you enchantress! what tricks you play
with us! The old is already proved, — the past and
the distant hold nothing but the beautiful.

Or let us take another view. Suppose Walt Whit-
man had never existed, and some bold essayist, like
Mr. Higginson or Matthew Arnold, had projected
him in abstract, outlined him on a scholarly ideal
background, formulated and put in harmless critical
periods the principles of art which he illustrates, and
which are the inevitable logic of his poems, — said

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essayist would have won great applause. "Yes, indeed, that were a poet to cherish; fill those shoes and you have a god."

How different a critic's account of Shakespeare from Shakespeare himself, — the difference between the hewn or sawed timber and the living tree! A few years ago we had here a lecturer from over seas, who gave to our well-dressed audiences the high, moral, and intellectual statement of the poet Burns. It was very fine, and people were greatly pleased, vastly more so, I fear, than they were with Burns himself. Indeed, I could not help wondering how many of those appreciative listeners had any original satisfaction in the Scotch poet at first hand, or would have accepted him had he been their neighbor and fellow-citizen. But as he filtered through the scholarly mind in trickling drops, oh, he was so sweet!

Everybody stirred with satisfaction as the lecturer said: "When literature becomes dozy, respectable, and goes in the smooth grooves of fashion, and copies and copies again, something must be done; and to give life to that dying literature a man must be found *not educated under its influence*." I applauded with the rest, for it was a bold saying; but I could not help thinking how that theory, brought home to ourselves and illustrated in a living example, would have sent that nodding millinery and faultless tailory flying downstairs, as at an alarm of fire.

One great service of Walt Whitman is that he

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exerts a tremendous influence to bring the race up on this nether side, — to place the emotional, the assimilative, the sympathetic, the spontaneous, intuitive man, the man of the fluids and of the affections, flush with the intellectual man. That we moderns have fallen behind here is unquestionable, and we in this country more than the Old World peoples. All the works of Whitman, prose and verse, are embosomed in a sea of emotional humanity, and they float deeper than they show; there is far more in what they necessitate and imply than in what they say.

It is not so much of fatty degeneration that we are in danger in America, but of calcareous. The fluids, moral and physical, are evaporating; surfaces are becoming encrusted, there is a deposit of flint in the veins and arteries, outlines are abnormally sharp and hard, nothing is held in solution, all is precipitated in well-defined ideas and opinions.

But when I think of the type of character planted and developed by my poet, I think of a man or a woman rich above all things in the genial human attributes, one “nine times folded” in an atmosphere of tenderest, most considerate humanity, — an atmosphere warm with the breath of a tropic heart, that makes your buds of affection and of genius start and unfold like a south wind in May. Your intercourse with such a character is not merely intellectual; it is deeper and better than that. Walter

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Scott carried such a fund of sympathy and goodwill that even the animals found fellowship with him, and the pigs understood his great heart. .

It was the large endowment of Whitman, in his own character in this respect, that made his services in the army hospitals during the war so ministering and effective, and that renders his "Drum-Taps" the tenderest and most deeply yearning and sorrowful expression of the human heart in poetry that ever war called forth. Indeed, from my own point of view, there is no false or dangerous tendency among us, in life or in letters, that this poet does not offset and correct. Fret and chafe as much as we will, we are bound to gravitate, more or less, toward this mountain, and feel its bracing, rugged air.

Without a certain self-surrender there is no greatness possible in literature, any more than in religion, or in anything else. It is always a trait of the master that he is not afraid of being compromised by the company he keeps. He is the central and main fact in any company. Nothing so lowly but he will do it reverence; nothing so high but he can stand in its presence. His theme is the river, and he the ample and willing channel. Little natures love to disparage and take down; they do it in self-defense; but the master gives you all, and more than your due. Whitman does not stand aloof, superior, a priest or a critic: he abandons himself to all the strong human currents; he enters into and affiliates

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with every phase of life; he bestows himself royally upon whoever and whatever will receive him. There is no competition between himself and his subject; he is not afraid of over-praising, or making too much of the commonest individual. What exalts others exalts him.

We have had great help in Emerson in certain ways, — first-class service. He probes the conscience and the moral purpose as few men have done, and gives much needed stimulus there. But, after him, the need is all the more pressing for a broad, powerful, opulent, human personality to absorb these ideals, and to make something more of them than fine sayings. With Emerson alone we are rich in sunlight, but poor in rain and dew, — poor, too, in soil, and in the moist, gestating earth principle. Emerson's tendency is not to broaden and enrich, but to concentrate and refine.

Then, is there not an excessive modesty, without warrant in philosophy or nature, dwindling us in this country, drying us up in the viscera? Is there not a decay — a deliberate, strange abnegation and dread — of sane sexuality, of maternity and paternity, among us, and in our literary ideals and social types of men and women? For myself, I welcome any evidence to the contrary, or any evidence that deeper and counteracting agencies are at work, as unspeakably precious. I do not know where this evidence is furnished in such ample measure as in

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the pages of Walt Whitman. The great lesson of nature, I take it, is that a sane sensuality must be preserved at all hazards, and this, it seems to me, is also the great lesson of his writings. The point is fully settled in him that, however they may have been held in abeyance or restricted to other channels, there is still sap and fecundity, and depth of virgin soil in the race, sufficient to produce a man of the largest mould and the most audacious and unconquerable egotism, and on a plane the last to be reached by these qualities; a man of antique stature, of Greek fibre and gripe, with science and the modern added, without abating one jot or tittle of his native force, adhesiveness, Americanism, and democracy.

As I have already hinted, Whitman has met with by far his amplest acceptance and appreciation in Europe. There is good reason for this, though it is not what has been generally claimed, namely, that the cultivated classes of Europe are surfeited with respectability, half dead with *ennui* and routine, and find an agreeable change in the daring unconventionality of the new poet. For the fact is, it is not the old and jaded minds of London, or Paris, or Dublin, or Copenhagen, that have acknowledged him, but the fresh, eager, young minds. Nine tenths of his admirers there are the sturdiest men in the fields of art, science, and literature.

In many respects, as a race, we Americans have

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been pampered and spoiled : we have been brought up on sweets. I suppose that, speaking literally, no people under the sun consume so much confectionery, so much pastry and cake, or indulge in so many gassy and sugared drinks. The soda-fountain, with its syrups, has got into literature, and furnishes the popular standard of poetry. The old heroic stamina of our ancestors, that craved the bitter but nourishing home-brewed, has died out, and in its place there is a sickly cadaverousness that must be pampered and cosseted. Among educated people here there is a mania for the bleached, the double-refined, — white houses, white china, white marble, and white skins. We take the bone and sinew out of the flour in order to have white bread, and are bolting our literature as fast as possible.

It is for these and kindred reasons that Walt Whitman is more read abroad than in his own country. It is on the rank, human, and emotional side — sex, magnetism, health, physique, — that he is so full. Then his receptivity and assimilative powers are enormous, and he demands these in his reader. In fact, his poems are physiological as much as they are intellectual. They radiate from his entire being, and are charged to repletion with that blended quality of mind and body — psychic and physiologic — which the living form and presence send forth. Never before in poetry has the body received such ennoblement. The great theme is IDENTITY, and

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identity comes through the body; and all that pertains to the body, the poet teaches, is entailed upon the spirit. In his rapt gaze, the body and the soul are one, and what debases the one debases the other. Hence he glorifies the body. Not more ardently and purely did the great sculptors of antiquity carve it in the enduring marble than this poet has celebrated it in his masculine and flowing lines. The bearing of his work in this direction is invaluable. Well has it been said that the man or the woman who has "Leaves of Grass" for a daily companion will be under the constant, invisible influence of sanity, cleanliness, strength, and a gradual severance from all that corrupts and makes morbid and mean.

In regard to the unity and construction of the poems, the reader sooner or later discovers the true solution to be, that the dependence, cohesion, and final reconciliation of the whole are in the Personality of the poet himself. As in Shakespeare everything is strung upon the plot, the play, and loses when separated from it, so in this poet every line and sentence refers to and necessitates the Personality behind it, and derives its chief significance therefrom. In other words, "Leaves of Grass" is essentially a dramatic poem, a free representation of man in his relation to the outward world,—the play, the interchanges between him and it, apart from social and artificial considerations,—in which

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we discern the central purpose or thought to be for every man and woman his or her Individuality, and around that, Nationality. To show rather than to tell, — to body forth as in a play how these arise and blend; how the man is developed and recruited, his spirit's descent; how he walks through materials absorbing and conquering them; how he confronts the immensities of time and space; where are the true sources of his power, the soul's real riches, — that which "adheres and goes forward and is not dropped by death;" how he is all defined and published and made certain through his body; the value of health and physique; the great solvent, Sympathy, — to show the need of larger and fresher types in art and in life, and then how the state is compacted, and how the democratic idea is ample and composite, and cannot fail us, — to show all this, I say, not as in a lecture or a critique, but suggestively and inferentially, — to work it out freely and picturesquely, with endless variations, with person and picture and parable and adventure, is the lesson and object of "Leaves of Grass." From the first line, where the poet says,

"I loafe and invite my Soul,"

to the last, all is movement and fusion, — all is clothed in flesh and blood. The scene changes, the curtain rises and falls, but the theme is still Man, — his opportunities, his relations, his past, his future,

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his sex, his pride in himself, his omnivorousness, his "great hands," his yearning heart, his seething brain, the abysmal depths that underlie him and open from him, all illustrated in the poet's own character, — he the chief actor always. His personality directly facing you, and with its eye steadily upon you, runs through every page, spans all the details, and rounds and completes them, and compactly holds them. This gives the form and the art conception, and gives homogeneousness.

When Tennyson sends out a poem, it is perfect, like an apple or a peach; slowly wrought out and dismissed, it drops from his boughs holding a conception or an idea that spheres it and makes it whole. It is completed, distinct, and separate, — might be his, or might be any man's. It carries his quality, but it is a thing of itself, and centres and depends upon itself. Whether or not the world will hereafter consent, as in the past, to call only beautiful creations of this sort *poems*, remains to be seen. But this is certainly not what Walt Whitman does, or aims to do, except in a few cases. He completes no poems apart and separate from himself, and his pages abound in hints to that effect: —

"Let others finish specimens — I never finish specimens; I shower them by exhaustless laws, as Nature does, fresh and modern continually."

His lines are pulsations, thrills, waves of force,

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indefinite dynamics, formless, constantly emanating from the living centre, and they carry the quality of the author's personal presence with them in a way that is unprecedented in literature.

Occasionally there is a poem or a short piece that detaches itself, and assumes something like ejaculatory and statuesque proportion, as "O Captain, my Captain," "Pioneers," "Beat, Beat, Drums," and others in "Drum-Taps;" but all the great poems, like "Walt Whitman," "Song of the Open Road," "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," "To Working Men," "Sleep-Chasings," etc., are out-flamings, out-rushings, of the pent fires of the poet's soul. The first-named poem, which is the seething, dazzling sun of his subsequent poetic system, shoots in rapid succession waves of almost consuming energy. It is indeed a central orb of fiercest light and heat, swept by wild storms of emotion, but at the same time of sane and beneficent potentiality. Neither in it nor in either of the others is there the building-up of a fair verbal structure, a symmetrical piece of mechanism, whose last stone is implied and necessitated in the first.

"The critic's great error," says Heine, "lies in asking, 'What ought the artist to do?' It would be far more correct to ask, 'What does the artist intend?'"

It is probably partly because his field is so large, his demands so exacting, his method so new (neces-

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sarily so), and from the whole standard of the poems being what I may call an astronomical one, that the critics complain so generally of want of form in him. And the critics are right enough, as far as their objection goes. There is no deliberate form here, any more than there is in the forces of nature. Shall we say, then, that nothing but the void exists? The void is filled by a Presence. There is a controlling, directing, overarching will in every page, every verse, that there is no escape from. Design and purpose, natural selection, growth, culmination, are just as pronounced as in any poet.

There is a want of form in the unfinished statue, because it is struggling into form; it is nothing without form; but there is no want of form in the elemental laws and effusions,—in fire, or water, or rain, or dew, or the smell of the shore or the plunging waves. And may there not be the analogue of this in literature, — a potent, quickening, exhilarating quality in words, apart from and without any consideration of constructive form? Under the influence of the expansive, creative force that plays upon me from these pages, like sunlight or gravitation, the question of form never comes up, because I do not for one moment escape the eye, the source from which the power and action emanate.

I know that Walt Whitman has written many passages with reference far more to their position, interpretation, and scanning ages hence, than for

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current reading. Much of his material is too near us; it needs time. Seen through the vista of long years, perhaps centuries, it will assume quite different hues. Perhaps those long lists of trades, tools, and occupations would not be so repellent if we could read them, as we read Homer's catalogue of the ships, through the retrospect of ages. They are justified in the poem aside from their historic value, because they are alive and full of action, — panoramas of the whole mechanical and industrial life of America, north, east, south, west, — bits of scenery, bird's-eye views, glimpses of moving figures, caught as by a flash, characteristic touches indoors and out, all passing in quick succession before you. They have in the fullest measure what Lessing demands in poetry, — the quality of ebbing and flowing action, as distinct from the dead water of description; they are thoroughly dramatic, fused, pliant, and obedient to the poet's will. No glamour is thrown over them, no wash of sentiment; and if they have not the charm of novelty and distance, why, that is an accident that bars them in a measure to us, but not to the future.

Very frequently in these lists or enumerations of objects, actions, shows, there are sure to occur lines of perfect description: —

“Where the heifers browse — where geese nip their food
with short jerks;

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Where sun-down shadows lengthen over the limitless and
lonesome prairie;

Where herds of buffalo make a crawling spread of the
square miles far and near;

Where the splash of swimmers and divers cools the
warm noon;

Where the katydid works her chromatic reed on the
walnut-tree over the well."

"Spar-makers in the spar-yard, the swarming row of well-
grown apprentices,

The swing of their axes on the square-hew'd log, shaping
it toward the shape of a mast,

The brisk short crackle of the steel driven slantingly into
the pine,

The butter-color'd chips flying off in great flakes and
slivers,

The limber motion of brawny young arms and hips in
easy costumes."

"Always these compact lands — lands tied at the hips
with the belt stringing the huge oval lakes."

"Far breath'd land! Arctic braced! Mexican breez'd! —
the diverse! the compact!"

Tried by the standards of the perfect statuesque
poems, these pages will indeed seem strange enough;
but viewed as a part of the poetic compend of Amer-
ica, the swift gathering-in, from her wide-spreading,
multitudinous, material life, of traits and points and
suggestions that belong here and are characteristic,

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they have their value. The poet casts his great seine into events and doings and material progress, and these are some of the fish, not all beautiful by any means, but all terribly alive, and all native to these waters.

In the "Carol of Occupations" occur, too, those formidable inventories of the more heavy and coarse-grained trades and tools that few if any readers have been able to stand before, and that have given the scoffers and caricaturists their favorite weapons. If you detach a page of these and ask, "Is it poetry? have the 'hog-hook,' the 'killing-hammer,' 'the cutter's cleaver,' 'the packer's maul,' met with a change of heart, and been converted into celestial cutlery?" I answer, No, they are as barren of poetry as a desert is of grass; but in their place in the poem, and in the collection, they serve as masses of shade or neutral color in pictures, or in nature, or in character, — a negative service, but still indispensable. The point, the moral of the poem, is really backed up and driven home by this list. The poet is determined there shall be no mistake about it. He will not put in the dainty and pretty things merely, — he will put in the coarse and common things also, and he swells the list till even his robust muse begins to look uneasy. Remember, too, that Whitman declaredly writes the lyrics of America, of the masses, of democracy, and of the practical labor of mechanics, boatmen, and farmers: —

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"The sum of all known reverence I add up in you, whoever you are;

All doctrines, all politics and civilization, exude from you;

All sculpture and monuments, and anything inscribed anywhere, are tallied in you;

The gist of histories and statistics as far back as the records reach, is in you this hour, and myths and tales the same:

If you were not breathing and walking here, where would they all be?

The most renown'd poems would be ashes, orations and plays would be vacuums.

"All architecture is what you do to it when you look upon it;

(Did you think it was in the white or gray stone? or the lines of the arches and cornices?)

"All music is what awakens from you when you are reminded by the instruments;

It is not the violins and the cornets — it is not the oboe, nor the beating drums — nor the score of the baritone singer singing his sweet *romanza* — nor that of the men's chorus, nor that of the women's chorus, It is nearer and farther than they."

Out of this same spirit of reverence for man and all that pertains essentially to him, and the steady ignoring of conventional and social distinctions and prohibitions, and on the same plane as the universal

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brotherhood of the poems, come those passages in "Leaves of Grass" that have caused so much abuse and fury, — the allusions to sexual acts and organs, — the momentary contemplation of man as the perpetuator of his species. Many good judges, who have followed Whitman thus far, stop here and refuse their concurrence. But if the poet has failed in this part, he has failed in the rest. It is of a piece with the whole. He has felt in his way the same necessity as that which makes the anatomist or the physiologist not pass by, or neglect, or falsify, the loins of his typical personage. All the passages and allusions that come under this head have a scientific coldness and purity, but differ from science, as poetry always must differ, in being alive and sympathetic, instead of dead and analytic. There is nothing of the forbidden here, none of those sweet morsels that we love to roll under the tongue, such as are found in Byron and Shakespeare, and even in austere Dante. If the fact is not lifted up and redeemed by the solemn and far-reaching laws of maternity and paternity, through which the poet alone contemplates it, then it is irredeemable, and one side of our nature is intrinsically vulgar and mean.

Again: Out of all the full-grown, first-class poems, no matter what their plot or theme, emerges a sample of Man, each after its kind, its period, its nationality, its antecedents. The vast and cumbrous Hindu epics contribute their special types of both

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man and woman, impossible except from far-off Asia and Asian antiquity. Out of Homer, after all his gorgeous action and events, the distinct personal identity, the heroic and warlike chieftain of Hellas only permanently remains. In the same way, when the fire and fervor of Shakespeare's plots and passions subside, the special feudal personality, as lord or gentleman, still towers in undying vitality. Even the Sacred Writings themselves, considered as the first great poems, leave on record, out of all the rest, the portraiture of a characteristic Oriental Man. Far different from these (and yet, as he says, "the same old countenance pensively looking forth," and "the same red running blood"), "Leaves of Grass" and "Two Rivulets" also bring their contribution; nay, behind every page *that* is the main purport, — to outline a New World Man and a New World Woman, modern, complete, democratic, not only fully and nobly intellectual and spiritual, but in the same measure physical, emotional, and even fully and nobly carnal.

An acute person once said to me, "As I read and re-read these poems, I more and more think their inevitable result in time must be to produce

‘A race of splendid and savage *old men*,’

of course dominated by moral and spiritual laws, but with volcanoes of force always alive beneath the surface.”

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And still again: One of the questions to be put to any poem assuming a first-class importance among us — and I especially invite this inquiry toward “Leaves of Grass” — is, How far is this work consistent with, and the outcome of, that something which secures to the race ascendancy, empire, and perpetuity? There is in every dominant people a germ, a quality, an expansive force, that, no matter how it is overlaid, gives them their push and their hold upon existence, — writes their history upon the earth, and stamps their imprint upon the age. To what extent is your masterpiece the standard-bearer of this quality, — helping the race to victory? helping me to be more myself than I otherwise would?

III

Not the least of my poet's successes is in his thorough assimilation of the modern sciences, transmuting them into strong poetic nutriment, and in the extent to which all his main poems are grounded in the deepest principles of modern philosophical inquiry.

Nearly all the old literatures may be said to have been founded upon fable, and upon a basis and even superstructure of ignorance, that, however charming it may be, we have not now got, and could not keep if we had. The bump of wonder and the feeling of the marvelous, — a kind of half-pleasing fear, like that of children in the dark or in the woods, — were

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largely operative with the old poets, and I believe are necessary to any eminent success in this field; but they seem nearly to have died out of the modern mind, like organs there is no longer any use for. The poetic temperament has not yet adjusted itself to the new lights, to science, and to the vast fields and expanses opened up in the physical cosmos by astronomy and geology, and in the spiritual or intellectual world by the great German metaphysicians. The staple of a large share of our poetic literature is yet mainly the result of the long age of fable and myth that now lies behind us. "Leaves of Grass" is, perhaps, the first serious and large attempt at an expression in poetry of a knowledge of the earth as one of the orbs, and of man as a microcosm of the whole, and to give to the imagination these new and true fields of wonder and romance. In it fable and superstition are at an end, priestcraft is at an end, skepticism and doubt are at an end, with all the misgivings and dark forebodings that have dogged the human mind since it began to relax its hold upon tradition and the past; and we behold man reconciled, happy, ecstatic, full of reverence, awe, and wonder, reinstated in Paradise,—the paradise of perfect knowledge and unrestricted faith.

It needs but a little pondering to see that the great poet of the future will not be afraid of science, but will rather seek to plant his feet upon it as upon

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a rock. He knows that, from an enlarged point of view, there is no feud between Science and Poesy, any more than there is between Science and Religion, or between Science and Life. He sees that the poet and the scientist do not travel opposite but parallel roads, that often approach each other very closely, if they do not at times actually join. The poet will always pause when he finds himself in opposition to science; and the scientist is never more worthy the name than when he escapes from analysis into synthesis, and gives us living wholes. And science, in its present bold and receptive mood, may be said to be eminently creative, and to have made every first-class thinker and every large worker in any æsthetic or spiritual field immeasurably its debtor. It has dispelled many illusions, but it has more than compensated the imagination by the unbounded vistas it has opened up on every hand. It has added to our knowledge, but it has added to our ignorance in the same measure: the large circle of light only reveals the larger circle of darkness that encompasses it, and life and being and the orbs are enveloped in a greater mystery to the poet to-day than they were in the times of Homer or Isaiah. Science, therefore, does not restrict the imagination, but often compels it to longer flights. The conception of the earth as an orb shooting like a midnight meteor through space, a brand cast by the burning sun with the fire at its heart still un-

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quenched, the sun itself shooting and carrying the whole train of worlds with it, no one knows whither, — what a lift has science given the imagination in this field! Or the tremendous discovery of the correlation and conservation of forces, the identity and convertibility of heat and force and motion, and that no ounce of power is lost, but forever passed along, changing form but not essence, is a poetic discovery no less than a scientific one. The poets have always felt that it must be so, and, when the fact was authoritatively announced by science, every profound poetic mind must have felt a thrill of pleasure. Or the nebular hypothesis of the solar system, — it seems the conception of some inspired madman, like William Blake, rather than the cool conclusion of reason, and to carry its own justification, as great power always does. Indeed, our interest in astronomy and geology is essentially a poetic one, — the love of the marvelous, of the sublime, and of grand harmonies. The scientific conception of the sun is strikingly Dantesque, and appalls the imagination. Or the hell of fire through which the earth has passed, and the æons of monsters from which its fair forms have emerged, — from which of the seven circles of the *Inferno* did the scientist get his hint? Indeed, science everywhere reveals a carnival of mightier gods than those that cut such fantastic tricks in the ancient world. Listen to Tyndall on light, or to Youmans on the chemistry of a sunbeam,

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and see how fable pales its ineffectual fires, and the boldest dreams of the poets are eclipsed.

The vibratory theory of light and its identity with the laws of sound, the laws of the tides and the seasons, the wonders of the spectroscope, the theory of gravitation, of electricity, of chemical affinity, the deep beneath deep of the telescope, the world within world of the microscope, — in these and many other fields it is hard to tell whether it is the scientist or the poet we are listening to. What greater magic than that you can take a colorless ray of light, break it across a prism, and catch upon a screen all the divine hues of the rainbow?

In some respects science has but followed out and confirmed the dim foreshadowings of the human breast. Man in his simplicity has called the sun father and the earth mother. Science shows this to be no fiction, but a reality; that we are really children of the sun, and that every heart-beat, every pound of force we exert, is a solar emanation. The power with which you now move and breathe came from the sun just as literally as the bank-notes in your pocket came from the bank.

The ancients fabled the earth as resting upon the shoulders of Atlas, and Atlas as standing upon a turtle; but what the turtle stood upon was a puzzle. An acute person says that science has but changed the terms of the equation, but that the unknown quantity is the same as ever. The earth now rests

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upon the sun, — in his outstretched palm; the sun rests upon some other sun, and that upon some other; but what they all finally rest upon, who can tell? Well may Tennyson speak of the “fairy tales of science,” and well may Walt Whitman say: —

“I lie abstracted, and hear beautiful tales of things, and
the reasons of things;
They are so beautiful, I nudge myself to listen.”

But, making all due acknowledgments to science, there is one danger attending it that the poet alone can save us from, — the danger that science, absorbed with its great problems, will forget Man. Hence the especial office of the poet with reference to science is to endow it with a human interest. The heart has been disenchanted by having disclosed to it blind, abstract forces where it had enthroned personal humanistic divinities. In the old time, man was the centre of the system; everything was interested in him, and took sides for or against him. There were nothing but men and gods in the universe. But in the results of science the world is more and more, and man is less and less. The poet must come to the rescue, and place man again at the top, magnify him, exalt him, reinforce him, and match these wonders from without with equal wonders from within. Welcome to the bard who is not appalled by the task, and who can readily assimilate and turn into human emotions these vast deductions

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of the savants! The minor poets do nothing in this direction; only men of the largest calibre and the most heroic fibre are adequate to the service. Hence one finds in Tennyson a vast deal more science than he would at first suspect; but it is under his feet; it is no longer science, but faith, or reverence, or poetic nutriment. It is in "Locksley Hall," "The Princess," "In Memoriam," "Maud," and in others of his poems. Here is a passage from "In Memoriam:" —

"They say,
The solid earth whereon we tread
"In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
Till at the last arose the man;
"Who throve and branch'd from clime to clime.
The herald of a higher race,
And of himself in higher place
If so he type this work of time
"Within himself, from more to more;
Or, crown'd with attributes of woe,
Like glories, move his course, and show
That life is not as idle ore,
"But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And batter'd with the shocks of doom

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“To shape and use. Arise and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.”

Or in this stanza behold how the science is disguised
or turned into the sweetest music: —

“Move eastward, happy earth, and leave
Yon orange sunset waning slow;
From fringes of the faded eve,
O happy planet, eastward go;
Till over thy dark shoulder glow
Thy silver sister-world, and rise
To glass herself in dewy eyes
That watch me from the glen below.”

A recognition of the planetary system, and of the great fact that the earth moves eastward through the heavens, in a soft and tender love-song!

But in Walt Whitman alone do we find the full, practical absorption, and re-departure therefrom, of the astounding idea that the earth is a star in the heavens like the rest, and that man, as the crown and finish, carries in his moral consciousness the flower, the outcome, of all this wide field of turbulent unconscious nature. Of course in his handling it is no longer science, or rather it is science dissolved in the fervent heat of the poet's heart, and charged with emotion. “The words of true poems,” he says, “are the tufts and final applause of science.” Before

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Darwin or Spencer he proclaimed the doctrine of evolution: —

“I am stuccoed with quadrupeds and birds all over,
And have distanced what is behind me for good reasons,
And call anything close again when I desire it.

“In vain the speeding and shyness;
In vain the plutonic rocks send their old heat against my
 approach;
In vain the mastodon retreats beneath his own powder’d
 bones;
In vain objects stand leagues off, and assume manifold
 shapes;
In vain the ocean settling in hollows, and the great mon-
 sters lying low.”

In the following passage the idea is more fully carried out, and man is viewed through a vista which science alone has laid open; yet how absolutely a work of the creative imagination is revealed: —

“I am an acme of things accomplish’d, and I am incloser
 of things to be.
My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs;
On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches be-
 tween the steps;
All below duly travel’d, and still I mount and mount.

“Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me;
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing — I know I was
 even there;

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I waited unseen and always, and slept through the lethargic mist,
And took my time, and took no hurt from the fœtid carbon.

“Long I was hugg’d close — long and long,
Immense have been the preparations for me,
Faithful and friendly the arms that have help’d me,
Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful
boatmen;
For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings;
They sent influences to look after what was to hold me.

“Before I was born out of my mother, generations guided
me;
My embryo has never been torpid — nothing could overlay it,
For it the nebula cohered to an orb,
The long low strata piled to rest it on,
Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,
Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths, and
deposited it with care;
All forces have been steadily employ’d to complete and
delight me:
Now on this spot I stand with my robust Soul.”

I recall no single line of poetry in the language
that fills my imagination like that beginning the
second stanza: —

‘Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me.”

One seems to see those huge Brocken shadows of

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the past sinking and dropping below the horizon like mountain peaks, as he presses onward on his journey. Akin to this absorption of science is another quality in my poet not found in the rest, except perhaps a mere hint of it now and then in Lucretius, — a quality easier felt than described. It is a tidal wave of emotion running all through the poems, which is now and then crested with such passages as this: —

“I am he that walks with the tender and growing night;
I call to the earth and sea, half held by the night.

“Press close, bare-bosom’d night! Press close, magnetic,
nourishing night!

Night of south winds! night of the large, few stars!
Still, nodding night! mad, naked, summer night.

“Smile, O voluptuous, cool-breath’d earth!

Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!

Earth of departed sunset! Earth of the mountains, misty
topt!

Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon, just tinged
with blue!

Earth of shine and dark, mottling the tide of the river!

Earth of the limpid gray of clouds, brighter and clearer
for my sake!

Far - swooping, elbow’d earth! rich, apple - blossom’d
earth!

Smile, for your lover comes!”

Professor Clifford calls it “cosmic emotion,”

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a poetic thrill and rhapsody in contemplating the earth as a whole, — its chemistry and vitality, its bounty, its beauty, its power, and the applicability of its laws and principles to human, æsthetic, and art products. It affords the key to the theory of art upon which Whitman's poems are projected, and accounts for what several critics call their sense of magnitude, — "something of the vastness of the succession of objects in Nature."

"I swear there is no greatness or power that does not emulate those of the earth!

I swear there can be no theory of any account, unless it corroborate the theory of the earth!

No politics, art, religion, behavior, or what not, is of account, unless it compare with the amplitude of the earth,

Unless it face the exactness, vitality, impartiality, rectitude of the earth."

Or again, in his "Laws for Creation:" —

"All must have reference to the ensemble of the world, and the compact truth of the world,

There shall be no subject too pronounced — All works shall illustrate the divine law of indirections."

Indeed, the earth ever floats in this poet's mind as his mightiest symbol, — his type of completeness and power. It is the armory from which he draws his most potent weapons. See, especially, "To the Sayers of Words," "This Compost," "The Song of

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the Open Road," and "Pensive on her Dead gazing
I heard the Mother of all."

The poet holds essentially the same attitude
toward cosmic humanity, well illustrated in "Salut
au Monde:" —

"My spirit has pass'd in compassion and determination
around the whole earth;

I have look'd for equals and lovers, and found them
ready for me in all lands;

I think some divine rapport has equalized me with them.

"O vapors! I think I have risen with you and moved
away to distant continents, and fallen down there
for reasons;

I think I have blown with you, O winds;

O waters, I have finger'd every shore with you."

Indeed, the whole book is leavened with vehement Comradeship. Not only in the relations of individuals to each other shall loving good-will exist and be cultivated, — not only between the different towns and cities, and all the States of this indissoluble, compacted Union, — but it shall make a tie of fraternity and fusion holding all the races and peoples and countries of the whole earth.

Then the National question. As Whitman's completed works now stand, in their two volumes, it is certain they could only have grown out of the Secession War; and they will probably go to future ages as in literature the most characteristic identi-

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fication of that war, — risen from and portraying it, representing its sea of passions and progresses, partaking of all its fierce movements and perturbed emotions, and yet sinking the mere military parts of that war, great as those were, below and with matters far greater, deeper, more human, more expanding, and more enduring.

I must not close this paper without some reference to Walt Whitman's prose writings, which are scarcely less important than his poems. Never has Patriotism, never has the antique Love of Country, with even doubled passion and strength, been more fully expressed than in these contributions. They comprise two thin volumes, — now included in "Two Rivulets," — called "Democratic Vistas" and "Memoranda during the War;" the former exhibiting the personality of the poet in more vehemence and sweeping action even than do the poems, and affording specimens of soaring vaticination and impassioned appeal impossible to match in the literature of our time. The only living author suggested is Carlyle; but so much is added, the *presence* is so much more vascular and human, and the whole page so saturated with faith and love and democracy, that even the great Scotchman is overborne. Whitman, too, radiates belief, while at the core of Carlyle's utterances is despair. The style here is eruptive and complex, or what Jeremy Taylor calls *agglomerative*, and puts the Addisonian models

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utterly to rout, — a style such as only the largest and most Titanic workman could effectively use. A sensitive lady of my acquaintance says reading the “*Vistas*” is like being exposed to a pouring hail-storm, — the words fairly bruise her mind. In its literary construction the book is indeed a shower, or a succession of showers, multitudinous, wide-stretching, down-pouring, — the wrathful bolt and the quick veins of poetic fire lighting up the page from time to time. I can easily conceive how certain minds must be swayed and bent by some of these long, involved, but firm and vehement passages. I cannot deny myself the pleasure of quoting one or two pages. The writer is referring to the great literary relics of past times: —

“For us, along the great highways of time, those monuments stand, — those forms of majesty and beauty. For us those beacons burn through all the nights. Unknown Egyptians, graving hieroglyphs; Hindus, with hymn and apothegm and endless epic; Hebrew prophet, with spirituality, as in flames of lightning, conscience like red-hot iron, plaintive songs and screams of vengeance for tyrannies and enslavement; Christ, with bent head, brooding love and peace, like a dove; Greek, creating eternal shapes of physical and æsthetic proportion; Roman, lord of satire, the sword, and the codex, — of the figures, some far off and veiled, others near and visible; Dante, stalking with lean form, nothing but

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fibre, not a grain of superfluous flesh; Angelo, and the great painters, architects, musicians; rich Shakespeare, luxuriant as the sun, artist and singer of Feudalism in its sunset, with all the gorgeous colors, owner thereof, and using them at will; — and so to such as German Kant and Hegel, where they, though near us, leaping over the ages, sit again, impassive, imperturbable, like the Egyptian gods. Of these, and the like of these, is it too much, indeed, to return to our favorite figure, and view them as orbs, moving in free paths in the spaces of that other heaven, the cosmic intellect, the Soul?

“Ye powerful and resplendent ones! ye were, in your atmospheres, grown not for America, but rather for her foes, the Feudal and the old — while our genius is democratic and modern. Yet could ye, indeed, but breathe your breath of life into our New World’s nostrils — not to enslave us as now, but, for our needs, to breed a spirit like your own — perhaps (dare we to say it?) to dominate, even destroy what you yourselves have left! On your plane, and no less, but even higher and wider, will I mete and measure for our wants to-day and here. I demand races of orbic bards, with unconditional, uncompromising sway. Come forth, sweet democratic despots of the west!”

Here is another passage of a political cast, but showing the same great pinions and lofty flight: —

“It seems as if the Almighty had spread before

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this nation charts of imperial destinies, dazzling as the sun, yet with lines of blood, and many a deep intestine difficulty, and human aggregate of cankerous imperfection, — saying, Lo! the roads, the only plans of development, long, and varied with all terrible balks and ebullitions. You said in your soul, I will be empire of empires, overshadowing all else, past and present, putting the history of Old World dynasties, conquests, behind me as of no account, — making a new history, the history of Democracy, making old history a dwarf, — I alone inaugurating largeness, culminating time. If these, O lands of America, are indeed the prizes, the determinations of your Soul, be it so. But behold the cost, and already specimens of the cost. Behold the anguish of suspense, existence itself wavering in the balance, uncertain whether to rise or fall; already, close behind you and around you, thick winrows of corpses on battlefields, countless maimed and sick in hospitals, treachery among Generals, folly in the Executive and Legislative departments, schemers, thieves everywhere, — cant, credulity, make-believe everywhere. Thought you greatness was to ripen for you, like a pear? If you would have greatness, know that you must conquer it through ages, centuries, — must pay for it with a proportionate price. For you, too, as for all lands, the struggle, the traitor, the wily person in office, scrofulous wealth, the surfeit of prosperity, the demonism of greed, the hell of pas-

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sion, the decay of faith, the long postponement the fossil-like lethargy, the ceaseless need of revolutions, prophets, thunder-storms, deaths, births, new projections, and invigorations of ideas and men."

The "Memoranda during the War" is mainly a record of personal experiences, nursing the sick and wounded soldiers in the hospitals: most of it is in a low key, simple, unwrought, like a diary kept for one's self; but it reveals the large, tender, sympathetic soul of the poet even more than his elaborate works, and puts in practical form that unprecedented and fervid comradeship which is his leading element. It is printed almost verbatim, just as the notes were jotted down at the time and on the spot. It is impossible to read it without the feeling of tears, while there is elsewhere no such portrayal of the common soldier, and such appreciation of him, as is contained in its pages. It is heart's blood, every word of it, and along with "Drum-Taps" is the only literature of the war thus far entirely characteristic and worthy of serious mention. There are in particular two passages in the "Memoranda" that have amazing dramatic power, vividness, and rapid action, like some quick painter covering a large canvas. I refer to the account of the assassination of President Lincoln, and to that of the scenes in Washington after the first battle of Bull Run. What may be called the mass-movement of Whitman's prose style — the rapid marshaling and grouping together of many

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facts and details, gathering up, and recruiting, and expanding as the sentences move along, till the force and momentum become like a rolling flood, or an army in echelon on the charge — is here displayed with wonderful effect.

Noting and studying what forces move the world, the only sane explanation that comes to me of the fact that such writing as these little volumes contain has not, in this country especially, met with its due recognition and approval, is that, like all Whitman's works, they have really never yet been published at all in the true sense, — have never entered the arena where the great laurels are won. They have been printed by the author, and a few readers have found them out, but to all intents and purposes they are unknown.

I have not dwelt on Whitman's personal circumstances, his age (he is now, 1877, entering his fifty-ninth year), paralysis, seclusion, and the treatment of him by certain portions of the literary classes, although these have all been made the subjects of wide discussion of late, both in America and Great Britain, and have, I think, a bearing under the circumstances on his character and genius. It is an unwritten tragedy that will doubtless always remain unwritten. I will but mention an eloquent appeal of the Scotch poet, Robert Buchanan, published in London in March, 1876, eulogizing and defending the American bard, in his old age, illness, and

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poverty, from the swarms of maligners who still continue to assail him. The appeal has this fine passage: —

“He who wanders through the solitudes of far-off Uist or lonely Donegal may often behold the Golden Eagle sick to death, worn with age or famine, or with both, passing with weary waft of wing from promontory to promontory, from peak to peak, pursued by a crowd of rooks and crows, which fall back screaming whenever the noble bird turns his indignant head, and which follow frantically once more, hooting behind him, whenever he wends again upon his way.”

Skipping many things I should yet like to touch upon, — for this paper is already too long, — I will say in conclusion that, if any reader of mine is moved by what I have here written to undertake the perusal of “Leaves of Grass,” or the later volume, “Two Rivulets,” let me yet warn him that he little suspects what is before him. Poetry in the Virgilian, Tennysonian, or Lowellian sense it certainly is not. Just as the living form of man in its ordinary garb is less beautiful (yet more beautiful) than the marble statue; just as the living woman and child that may have sat for the model is less beautiful (yet more so) than one of Raphael’s finest Madonnas, or just as a forest of trees addresses itself less directly to the feeling of what is called art and form than the house or other edifice built from them; just

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as you, and the whole spirit of our current times, have been trained to feed on and enjoy, not Nature or Man, or the aboriginal forces, or the actual, but pictures, books, art, and the selected and refined, — just so these poems will doubtless first shock and disappoint you. Your admiration for the beautiful is never the feeling directly and chiefly addressed in them, but your love for the breathing flesh, the concrete reality, the moving forms and shows of the universe. A man reaches and moves you, not an artist. Doubtless, too, a certain withholding and repugnance has first to be overcome, analogous to a cold sea plunge; and it is not till you experience the reaction, the after-glow, and feel the swing and surge of the strong waves, that you know what Walt Whitman's pages really are. They don't give themselves at first, — like the real landscape and the sea, they are all indirections. You may have to try them many times; there is something of Nature's rudeness and forbiddingness, not only at the first, but probably always. But after you have mastered them by resigning yourself to them, there is nothing like them anywhere in literature for vital help and meaning. The poet says: —

“The press of my foot to the earth springs a hundred
affections,
That scorn the best I can do to relate them.”

And the press of your mind to these pages will

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certainly start new and countless problems that poetry and art have never before touched, and that afford a perpetual stimulus and delight.

It has been said that the object of poetry and the higher forms of literature is to escape from the tyranny of the real into the freedom of the ideal; but what is the ideal unless ballasted and weighted with the real? All these poems have a lofty ideal background; the great laws and harmonies stretch unerringly above them, and give their vista and perspective. It is because Whitman's ideal is clothed with rank materiality, as the soul is clothed with the carnal body, that his poems beget such warmth and desire in the mind, and are the reservoirs of so much power. No one can feel more than I how absolutely necessary it is that the facts of nature and experience be born again in the heart of the bard, and receive the baptism of the true fire before they be counted poetical; and I have no trouble on this score with the author of "Leaves of Grass." He never fails to ascend into spiritual meanings. Indeed, the spirituality of Walt Whitman is the chief fact after all, and dominates every page he has written.

Observe that this singer and artist makes no *direct* attempt to be poetical, any more than he does to be melodious or rhythmical. He approaches these qualities and results as it were from beneath, and always indirectly; they are drawn to him, not he to

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them ; and if they appear absent from his page at first, it is because we have been looking for them in the customary places on the outside, where he never puts them, and have not yet penetrated the interiors. As many of the fowls hide their eggs by a sort of intuitive prudery and secretiveness, Whitman always half hides, or more than half hides, his thought, his glow, his magnetism, his most golden and orbic treasures.

Finally, as those men and women respect and love Walt Whitman best who have known him longest and closest personally, the same rule will apply to "Leaves of Grass" and the later volume, "Two Rivulets." It is indeed neither the first surface reading of those books, nor perhaps even the second or third, that will any more than prepare the student for the full assimilation of the poems. Like Nature, and like the Sciences, they suggest endless suites of chambers opening and expanding more and more and continually.

188 ~~inversion~~
" more ~~from~~ ~~the~~ face

P. 87
Hammingbirds
" natural death "

P. 159 (G. E. A. 159)
A stern, natural inversion is indispensable

